VALLEY VOICE

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RMA Starts Peer Review of CEMEX' Stillwell Project

Catherine Doe

This is part two of an ongoing series about CEMEX, water and wells going dry in Lemon Cove.

At the end of 2013, a row of Lemon Cove homes along the Stillwell Mining Project, owned and operated by CEMEX, started to see the underground water levels drop. By January, several of their wells had gone dry. The residents concluded that their wells went dry after CEMEX stopped filling the recharge trench. This trench is an integral part of Tulare County's granting CEMEX permission to operate the Stillwell gravel mine.

The residents alerted the Resource Management Agency (RMA), which is in charge of enforcing gravel companies' compliance with their surface mining permits. One of the resident's letters to the RMA stated, "When Tulare County gave permission to the mining company to mine the area around Lemon Cove, it was with the assurance that the recharge trench would be kept running to provide water to the wells for the nearby houses. This trench is no longer being turned on and our well is running dry and pumping air."

The Conditional Use Permit (CUP) states that on receipt of complaints about the underground water levels, CEMEX is obligated to hire a professional hydrologist to find the cause and/or fix the problem. It was no surprise when the CEMEX-hired company, EMKO Environmental, Inc., concluded that the multinational company had nothing to do with the residents' wells going dry. Dr. Andrew A. Kopania is the president and principal hydrologist for EMKO Environmental, and he concluded that the Lemon Cove wells went dry due to the drought.

RMA delivers three months supply of drinking water to Lemon Cove residents. Pictured are Mary and Orville Cloud with their dog Patches.

After months of debate, meetings, and little bit of foot-dragging, RMA hired an independent engineering company to do a peer review of Kopania's findings and review all other information concerning the Lemon Cove wells. The peer report should be ready by the end of August.

Property Owner's Rebuttal to EMKO Environmental Hydrology Report

Tom Cairns, owner of Sierra Chief Quality Western Products, wrote in a letter to RMA that, "The CEMEX hydrology report recently issued on the Stillwell site is not complete and all discussions to date are hearsay until the water levels, referenced to mean sea level (MLS), are included in that report. These measurements are going to be the only basis for a discussion about the 'cone of depression,' mine excavation, and the neighboring water wells. This water level measurement is included in all hydrology reports, except this one."

Dick Polly, a long-time Lemon Cove farmer, stated at the Tulare County Board of Supervisors meeting that, "the hydrology report that the RMA got this year is not complete. Elevations were not included, so the report is not valid. No one can make a decision until the levels of water in the Stillwell Lake and the surrounding wells are compared to mean sea level. The geology profiles across the Stillwell site were not

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County Employees Get First Raise in Six Years

Catherine Doe

On July 21st, the county's negotiating team and the Tulare County employee's union signed a tentative agreement for a one-year contract with a 3% raise. The agreement had to be approved by the union members and the Tulare County Board of Supervisors (TCBOS) before the new worker's contract became official. About 350 county employees voted, and 325 voted in favor of the one-year contract. On July 29th, the TCBOS voted in closed session to accept the agreement. The raise is scheduled to show up in the county employee's payroll on their September 2nd paycheck.

The contract brings to a close five months of intense and at times contentious negotiations. "I'm very pleased it has come to a conclusion. It's been an interesting process," said Tulare County Supervisor Phil Cox. He believes that the protests before supervisors meetings, marches down Mooney, and the coordinated speaking during the public comment, was a campaign to shame the supervisors into giving in to the union's

RAISE continued on **10 »**

David Roberts at the proposed site of his family's Elderwood Heights development.

Visalia Makes City Parks Safer

Catherine Doe

Visalia Neighborhood Preservation Manager Tracy Robertshaw and the Visalia Parks and Recreation Commission have been busy making Visalia a better place to live. Last year, Robertshaw presented an ordinance to ban shopping carts that has been a huge success. During the last city council meeting, she put forth an ordinance banning repeat criminals from using the parks for up to a year. The parks and recreation commission recently promoted the idea of making a children-only section in Wittman Village Park to discourage drug users and homeless from sleeping in the playground area. The decision has been put off to first consult with the Visalia city attorney to get a clearer understanding of what actions they can legally take.

According to Robertshaw, "The idea for the change to the park rules was a group effort between police, code enforcement and parks and recreation. As a group, we have been looking at ways to improve the usability of some of the troubled parks in the community. We are hoping that the changes will bring more families back into the listed parks. (Lincoln Oval, Seven Oaks, Pappas and Provident Skate Park)."

The most recent change proposed was targeted at repeat criminals. City departments have been working on a new ordinance to "maximize the community enjoyment of city parks by prohibiting activities and behaviors that interfere with that objective." On November 17, 2013, the item was presented to the parks and recreation commission and the support for the proposed changes was unanimous.

At the city council meeting on August 4th, the members approved 5-0 an ordinance amending the Visalia Municipal Code Section 12.32 to suspend persons from using parks who have been

PARKS continued on **13 »**

Tulare County Supervisors Delay Elderwood Heights Decision

Steve Pastis

At the July 29th Tulare County Board of Supervisors meeting, Supervisors Phil Cox, Pete Vander Poel and Mike Ennis heard arguments both for and against reversing the planning commission vote to deny the proposed 162-home Elderwood Heights development just west of the City of Woodlake.

However, with Supervisors Allen Ishida and Steve Worthley not in attendance, the decision was postponed until a 7:30pm meeting on August 12th in the Council Chambers at the Tulare Public Library. Ishida and Worthley will have to rely on written transcripts of the range of arguments presented on July 29th.

Aaron Bock, chief planner for the Tulare County Resource Management Agency (RMA), started the discussion by explaining the ecological concerns and state regulations that led to the commission's decision. After Supervisor Cox instructed those in attendance who were interested in speaking to not repeat previous arguments, because those have all been documented, several Woodlake area residents opposed to the project, from a crowd of about 60, addressed the board.

Kevin Russell brought in a mammoth molar that was found at the site and urged supervisors to consider the property's archaeological and historical value, and not allow it to be developed. "Once the ground is paved over, it cannot be retained," he said, adding that, "Native American artifacts (such as pictographs and beads) have been found on virtually every hill."

"Water is the real issue," said Robert Pearcy, who lives about a quarter-mile from the proposed development. "The lack of water is perhaps the most important thing to think about." He added that the project will need "an awful lot of water," and expressed concerns about the

ELDERWOOD continued on **8 »**

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FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

Unbearable

According to the July 20 *Fresno Bee*, the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), an eco-concerned non-profit corporation, has proposed a reintroduction of the grizzly bear into limited areas in several western states. In June of this year, a CBD petition to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service identified 110,000 acres the CBD would like to see added to the service's grizzly recovery plan. Part of that acreage includes areas of our very own Sierra Nevada.

Historically, *ursos arctos horribilis*--the grizzly--ranged from Baja California northward and east to the Rockies, encompassing much of the western United States. So named by early European explorers and settlers who observed the bear's behavior in the wild--grisly--the species was hunted into extinction in California. We're talking about a quarter to half ton beast standing, when upright, between seven and nine feet tall, and capable of running at about 30 miles per hour. In North America, no other animal better symbolizes the true wild; and while no other animal preys on the grizzly, the presence of that bear is indicative of the general soundness of whatever ecosystem it inhabits. Still, the *horriblis* inspires a primeval, back-brain terror in humans. The last known grizzly was killed in Tulare County in 1922.

But it remains, of course, on the California state flag, on the state seal, and as the mascot of the University of California. That's because there is a dichotomy of thought regarding the grizzly: we simultaneously fear and adore them. Native cultures revered them. It was the perfect and obvious choice of mascot for UC when it was established in Berkeley back in 1868. When the second campus--the Southern Branch, as it was referred to--was opened in 1919, it was also perfect and obvious for UCLA to choose the grizzly as its mascot. Thus we have in UCLA the baby Bears, or Bruins.

I wish it would have stopped there. But UCLA also stole many of UC's fight songs--and it was always doubly galling, as a Bears fan, to sit in Memorial Stadium in Berkeley listening to the Bruin's band play our songs while, in a shocking disregard of filial piety, their football team thrashed ours. We'll return to this presently. Right now I'd like to point out that, in the Berkeley of the late 1960s, in addition to all manner of other craziness going on, UC students would, when the Big Game was played at home, construct massive floats depicting our Bear doing something truly awful to Stanford's Indian. Eating him, usually. The Big Game has always tended to be very competitive, and it never comes as much of a surprise if one team, suffering an off year, upsets the other, ruining the great year it has enjoyed. The pageantry of the floats, I've always thought, was a tribute to such competitiveness--at least until 1972, when Stanford transformed itself from an Indian to "The Cardinal." A high-ranking priest? The finally articulated shade of their traditional red? I still have no idea. But Stanford selected, as its new mascot, a tree. How, in the setting of a float, is our Bear supposed to menace a tree? Grizzlies, except for their cubs, are not even capable of climbing trees.

But here's the thing. The reason that the Bruins became able so consistently to beat the Bears is due to a shift in the state's demographics. Because of the gold rush, the hub of California's economy was, on its entrance to statehood, San Francisco and the Bay Area. One hundred years ago, roughly 3.4 million people lived in California; today, that figure is more like 38 million, with Los Angeles enjoying the lion's--or should I say Bear's?--share of the population.

Today, there are no more than 1,800 grizzlies in the contiguous American wild, mostly inhabiting clusters in Yellowstone and Glacier national parks. CBD's concern is that, given climate change, these clusters could eventually be rendered unlivable, thus reducing by significant numbers the grizzly population. There were perhaps half so many in 1975 (On 25 October of that year, the Bruins downed the Bears 28-14.) when the grizzly was identified as endangered; yet now, in Yellowstone, their recovery is such that it is expected they will be reclassified this year. The CBD contends that Yosemite, Kings and Sequoia national parks would make an ideal range expansion to ensure the grizzly's survival. But Yosemite hosted 3.7 million people in 2013 alone--approximately the population of Los Angeles.

I wonder: Have the good folks over at CBD ever seen a movie called Jurassic Park?

It would be a disservice both to the bears and park-goers alike to reintroduce grizzlies to such popular tourist attractions. I agree that their range should be expanded--just not in California. Here, the grizzly should remain on the state flag, the state seal, and--at least on the gridiron--in whatever meager glory it can accrue to itself.

This all puts a fond memory in a new context. From 1994 to 1999, we lived in Cabo San Lucas, and because we had young children then, many of our family activities were geared towards them. One steamy September--the height of hurricane season--the circus came to town. We got front-row seats, and deep inside that tent the air was still and hot. Unbeknownst to us, a featured act was a bear tamer--a man who very nearly lost control of his five or six irritated and demonstrably resentful polar bears. And there was nothing in between us if he had.

Reintroducing the grizzly to California makes about as much sense as introducing the polar bear to Mexico.

— Joseph Oldenbourg

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Political Fix

Catherine Doe

Betty Yee to Run Against Swearengin for State Controller

The Republican Party's great white hope of winning just one statewide elected office in November evaporated two weeks ago. Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearengin had a better-than-even chance of winning the state controller's office against Democrat John Perez, who was conducting a ballot recount against Betty Yee for second place. Then something amazingly unusual happened. The adults showed up and Mr. Perez called off the ballot recount. In the span of a few hours, Ms. Swearingen went from the likely winner to a longshot.

Betty Yee is now Mayor Swearengin's opponent and has a resume that is the mirror image of the State Controller's job description. According to the Fresno Bee, "Before serving on the Board of Equalization – which hears tax appeals – she was chief deputy director for budget at the state Department of Finance and before that held staff positions on several fiscal and policy committees in both the state Assembly and Senate. She has a master's degree in public administration."

Mayor Swearengin has some political chops also: leading Fresno out of the nation's worst economic downturn since the Depression. Will that help her? With 28.4% of California's voters registered Republican, it won't be enough.

The nail in Mayor Swearengin's election coffin might be the fact that she decided against purchasing a statement in the voter information guide – her reason being that no one reads it. I read it, along with anyone else obsessed enough with politics to read my column.

Guess who else didn't buy one? The loser, Mr. Perez.

But that's not the real reason she did not buy a candidate's statement. Mayor Swearengin's campaign had to make their decision within 14 days of winning the primary. At that time, it looked like Mr. Perez was going to take second place and the Republican Party could taste victory if they could just throw enough money at the election. By purchasing a statement in the voter guide, candidates are limited to a spending limit of $8.1 million. Ms. Yee stated that the controller's race should be in the $2 to $3 million range. Yet a battle of the ages would have broken out between Mayor Swearengin and Mr. Perez, and the potential to butt up against the spending limit could have become a reality. It also would have made great political theater watching two candidates spend an obscene amount of money trying to prove to the voters how financially astute they were.

Mayor Swearengin deserves many brownie points, though, for recognizing a vulnerable political race and almost pulling off an unlikely victory. Her brilliant political maneuver just missed by 481 votes – votes probably gained by the few people that read Ms. Yee's candidate statement in the primary.

Kevin De Leon: Not Ready for Prime-time

Don't we all love it when a big city Democratic legislator tells us a thing or two about the Central Valley? Of course I am talking about open-mouth-and-insert-foot State Senate leader Kevin De Leon. When complaining about the High-Speed Rail he said, "I don't think it makes sense to lay down track in the middle of nowhere. It's illogical. No one lives out there in the tumbleweeds." Except, of course, for 6.5 million people.

During a visit to Fresno, in part to apologize for his first insult, Mr. De Leon had some choice words for State Senator Andy Vidak. It seems that Mr. De Leon doesn't think Andy is ready for prime time. According to the Fresno Bee, "It's hard work, especially if you have an area that is disproportionately impacted by all the challenges, for example, that the Central Valley has. You've got to have someone who is going to roll up their sleeves and really tackle this issue. You can't have someone who is starry eyed – I wear cowboy boots and I ride a big truck. And that, in itself, is what I deliver for the Valley. No, this is real-life stuff."

His comments were sparked by the fact that Sen. Vidak didn't vote for the water bond that Mr. De Leon co-sponsored. Sen. Vidak's opinion, if he is allowed to have one, is that Mr. De Leon's water bond falls short of the $11 billion bond already on the ballot. At the July 8th Tulare County Board of Supervisors meeting, Assembly Speaker Connie Conway spoke during public comment about her support for the current water bond that was negotiated back in 2009. "The water bond is there and the one we have is good."

Sen. Vidak's hope is that when legislators return in August they can build on what they have already agreed on and pass a better bond than Mr. De Leon's or the current one on the November ballot. Until then maybe Mr. De Leon can shut the heck up and leave the difficult decisions up to the legislators wearing the boots and driving the big trucks.

Public Opinion Survey Results Revealed

The Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) presented the results of their annual public opinion Survey at the July 21st Visalia City Council meeting. The CAC chose four different supermarkets to conduct the surveys selected from the four different quadrants of the city to help diversify the sample and promote geographic balance.

And the most surprising result? Among all age groups, local newspapers are the primary way that individuals receive information about their government. The question posed was "What is the desired way in which a resident can get information about the City?" Local newspapers came in first beating out email and even Facebook. Just as surprising, when looking at differences based upon age, the 18-to-34-year-olds actually used the newspaper more than any other group.

Good thing the Valley Voice is back!

The Public Opinion Survey revealed that residents feel that the City of Visalia provides a safe place to live and offers quality services. Ninety-six percent of respondents rated the overall quality of life in Visalia as Average to Very High.

Visalia Hires Demographer to Split Visalia into Districts

Doug Johnson of the National Demographic Corporation (NDC) was hired by Visalia to help split the city into five voting districts. Although Visalia citizens rejected a ballot initiative in 2012 to conduct district-based elections, the city's at-large system violates the California Voters' Rights Act. To avoid the expense of a lawsuit, the city council voted to hold their first by-district elections in 2016.

Splitting Visalia into five districts will be a ten-month process leaning heavily on public participation. Each district has to be population-balanced, and race cannot be the predominant factor in drawing the boundaries. The districts need to be compact and contiguous and not intentionally split neighborhoods. The NDC will be making public participation kits that can be downloaded from the city's website. The goal is to have the public participate in drawing draft districts or entire plans. When completed, the NDC will hold a public hearing on the consultant's and public's draft plans.

The final vote to approve the districts will be left up to the city council. During public comment, Irene Lapin didn't see any ethical way for the council members to vote on their own districts. She saw their final vote as an obvious conflict of interest. Two city council seats will be up for election in 2016 and three will be up in 2018. The city council needs to decide who, out of the five of them, will have to go through the hassle of running for office. They might also have to contend with the prospect of two city council members living in the same district.

Republicans Fundraising for the Democratic Party

What do the Democrats need to rally their base for the midterm election? Well, it ends up they need the Republicans. Two weeks ago, the Republicans voted to sue President Obama for exceeding the bounds of his constitutional authority when he delayed the implementation of a piece of ObamaCare – which the Republicans tried to repeal over 40 times. On one day alone – Monday, July 28th – the Democrats collected $1 million in donations from 50,000 donors. They have collected millions since then.

Five conservative Republicans in the House voted with the Democrats in voting down the lawsuit, but not for the same reasons. They voted against the lawsuit because it didn't go far enough and start proceedings to impeach President Obama.

Cha-ching.

The Democrats need a strong showing in November as they defend 21 Senate seats to the Republicans' 15. Many of those Democratic seats are in Republican-leaning states. The GOP only needs to win six of those seats to regain control of the Senate.

The strategy to sue the President was cooked up to rally the Republican base but has backfired, to say the least. While Sarah Palin calls for Pres. Obama's impeachment, Rep. John Boehner calls it a scam and the Democrats hit the news talk shows lamenting the Republicans' attempt to impeach the President. And the money keeps rolling in.

The Stunt Man

According to Cal Newsroom, "with a 20-point lead in the latest opinion polls, Brown has largely ignored Kashkari — most recently telling reporters that he might not bother to debate his opponent. 'I haven't made up my mind,'" Gov. Brown said.

What is a poor millionaire from Newport Beach to do?

Jump on a bus to Fresno! With $40 in his pocket, and one change of clothes, Mr. Kashkari spent a week living on the streets of Fresno trying to answer this question: With a 24% poverty rate, the highest in the nation, is California really back?"

Mr. Kashkari is going to have a hard time proving that the recession is not over in California. According to the Los Angeles Times, "California's unemployment rate dipped to 7.4% in June, a month in which the state finally recovered all the jobs lost during the recession." California added more than 24,000 jobs in June alone, and over the last year the state's unemployment rate fell from 9%, and has added more than 356,000 jobs.

But Mr. Kashkari's point is not that California hasn't recovered from the recession. His point is that California is a tale of two states – and depending on where you live, the recession is alive and well.

So why Fresno? A sweaty and unshaven Mr. Kashkari stared into one of his two hired videographer's cameras and explained. Fresno has one of the highest unemployment and poverty rates in California, and he wanted to highlight how the state's so-called economic recovery has passed over the quarter of the population living in the Central Valley.

According to Mr. Kashkari's YouTube video, "I walked mile after mile in 100-degree heat searching for a job. I offered to do anything: wash dishes, sweep floors, pack boxes, cook meals, anything. I went to dozens of businesses in search of work but wasn't able to get any. In seven days, I didn't see a single "Help Wanted" sign, but I did see plenty of signs that fast-food outlets now accept food stamps."

Tech-savvy Mr. Kashkari obviously didn't see Craigslist, either, where hundreds of jobs are available in Fresno. In fact, "Fifty Shades of Men" needs some extras and is coming to town. As one of the nation's hottest bachelors, he could easily get a stint with them.

While Mr. Kashkari slept in parking lots and on benches for six nights, his fellow Republican, Fresno Mayor Ashley Swearingen, campaigned for the state controller's office by espousing how deftly she has lead Fresno out of the Great Recession.

Can someone say, "Awkward?"

Maybe if he quits campaigning against the High-Speed Rail, Mr. Kashkari and his new-found friends living on the streets could get a $20/hour job here in a few months – a project, by the way, that is supported by Mayor Swearengin.

Next deadline:

14 August 2014

City Levies Huge Fine on Visalia Resident

Catherine Doe

At the July 21st Visalia City Council Meeting, the council voted to levy a fine of $29,556 on Abigail Trevino's residence in southwest Visalia for code and law enforcement violations. According to Tracy Robertshaw, neighborhood preservation manager, Trevino's case is the exception. "Ninety-nine percent of the time, home owners comply when they get their first letter of a possible fine for a code violation." said Robertshaw.

Trevino's fine originated from years of police visits and substandard living condition of her home. Half is for administrative fees as a result of code violations at her home. The other half is for recovery fees for police expenses during a February raid at her home.

Trevino's fine and mortgage add up to more than her house is worth. She earns on average $20,000 a year so she does not have money on hand to pay. Whether Abigail Trevino will walk away from her house, no one knows, probably not even her. But how she arrived here is less of a mystery.

Trevino said that the trouble started in 2005 when the police showed up with a search warrant. Her middle son and his friend had hidden two guns in her oldest son's bedroom. When the police showed up, they found the guns and arrested her oldest son who had been previously convicted on drug charges.

She revealed to me that her middle son "started running around with the wrong crowd," but when pressed, she admitted that her son was in a gang. Her three sons have a deadbeat dad and she carries an immense amount of guilt about how they turned out. Ironically, the oldest son ended up going to jail for two years on charges of illegal gun possession while the middle son involved in gangs went free.

In 2007, 2010 and 2013, the police were called out to her house to investigate gang activity or serve a search warrant. During each visit there were no arrests and nothing was found, but the police did call code enforcement each time for unsanitary conditions or health hazards.

Abigail Trevino and her dog, Ducky (pronounced 'dukey'), relaxing in her home on Monte Vista Avenue

From the outside of her property, except for the eight cars, her home looked well kept. From the inside it is clear that the family struggles with hoarding. Code enforcement found unsanitary conditions, several health hazards and an illegal pot grow. Her youngest son has a medical marijuana permit but that didn't cover the number of plants found.

Each time Robertshaw worked with Trevino to get the house up to code with mixed results. Abigail would clear out some of the garbage, and get rid of the marijuana plants, but then slip back after a few months later into non-compliance.

None of this prepared Trevino for what was going to happen the morning of February 1st of this year. At 6am there was a rumbling like an earthquake outside of Abigail's home. Little did she know that a swat team was at her front door with a search warrant looking for evidence of a gang-related attempted murder. Obviously the police were looking for her middle son, but he had moved out the year before. When the police started to smash through her front door, her youngest son screamed for them to stop so he could open it instead. Right as he got to the entry way the door broke open and flew past him. The police handcuffed Abigail, her two sons and a roommate and put them in separate patrol cars for questioning. There were 20 police cars, one armored car, six police in riot gear with full body shields, and many uniformed police. They did not present Abigail with a search warrant nor did they explain why they were there. The police just peppered her with questions about different cars she might have seen. The police did let Abigail keep her lap dog, Ducky, in the patrol car with her so the dog wouldn't freak out in the house.

During the search, the police threw her belongings out of boxes and drawers, broke expensive items, tore the insulation out of her attic leaving it spread over her bed and bedroom. They took $3,000 that they found in the pocket of a sweatshirt and have not returned it. As in the previous three times, the police did not find what they came looking for. But they did find some jars with marijuana residue on them, a product of her youngest son's use of medical marijuana. The police then arrested her two sons. They were not charged with anything and were released from jail a few days later. After a terrifying morning, and her two sons being thrown in jail, she received a bill for $12,066.60.

Trevino was not being charged for the raid itself but rather as a result of the 62 times the police had been called to her house since 2005. The fine was an effort to curb the resident's bad behavior and to recoup some of the expenses for past police officer time and resources. Again, after the raid, the police called code enforcement because of several hazards found in the home. As a result of Trevino's continual code violations, she was charged $14,802.

On April 8th of this year, Trevino's property was inspected and deemed compliant. Her case was closed but the fine for the code enforcement and police of $26,869 remained unpaid. Trevino failed to set up a payment plan or appeal their decision so the fine was placed on the tax roll which incurs a ten percent finance charge, bringing the total to $29,556.24.

During the city council meeting to decide on the amount of her fine, emotions ran high. Trevino testified that she did make calls to the city and was not in town for the appeal date. She also had two of her neighbors at the meeting, one of whom spoke on her behalf. Chief of Police Colleen Mestas was very sympathetic to the challenges faced by Trevino, a single mother with boys, but stated that the morning of February 1st was justified. The swat team was called to arrest a suspect for an attempted murder. Chief Mestas also explained that the police are required to have a search warrant, which they had, but they are not obligated to show it to the residents.

The city council had two choices; to charge the entire amount or cut the fine in half and have Trevino make payments. For the sake of the neighborhood four of the council members voted to charge the

HUGE FINE continued on **10 »**

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Reyes Appointed to Porterville City Council

Tony Maldonado

Adrian Monte Reyes was appointed to the Porterville City Council on July 15, filling a spot left open after the death of Council Member Pete McCracken shortly after the June 3election.

The city's charter required the council to agree upon and appoint a replacement within 30 days of a vacancy for any reason; after 30 days, the mayor could have directly appointed a replacement.

Porterville's council opened applications for the position to the public during the short period of July 1 to July 9; a total of 16 applications were received, including most candidates that lost in the June election and some that did not previously put their names forward.

Reyes did not participate in the June election; feelings in the community are mixed about his appointment over the runner-up candidate, Matthew Green.

Reyes has served in a variety of positions in the community: he is the co-founder of the Imagine Community Arts Center in Porterville, chairman of the Porterville Arts Commission, and a member of the Leadership Porterville Steering Committee.

An online poll ran by the *Porterville Recorder*, which asked, "Are you pleased with the appointment of Monte Reyes to the Porterville city council?"had 35.7% 'Yes' to 46.4% 'No'; 17.9% answered 'Don't know.'

Adrian Monte Reyes

Juan Duran, a candidate in the June election, did not file an application to be considered for appointment, and said that he would not have accepted an offer to join the council because he felt the position should go to Matthew Green, the runner-up in the election.

"By them appointing someone, they got a privilege to vote twice – the average voter only got to vote once," Duran said.

Due to his appointment and to prevent any possible conflict of interest, Reyes resigned from his position on the Porterville Chamber of Commerce. His appointment also created a vacancy at the Porterville Arts Commission.

"I want to thank everyone who turned in their papers," Reyes said after being sworn in. "It takes an extreme amount of confidence and a love of your community to fill out your papers and put them in and put your name in amongst other people."

The full agenda and minutes from the meeting — including all of the submitted applications — are available at the city's website, www.ci.porterville.ca.us.

Farmersville to Receive $500,000 in USDA Drought Aid

Staff Reports

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that the USDA is providing $9.7 million in emergency water assistance to 73,000 residents in 11 California counties experiencing the driest year on record.

The City of Farmersville will receive a $500,000 Emergency Community Water Assistance Grant (ECWAG) to construct pipelines connecting Cameron Creek Colony to the Farmersville water main and linking residents to the water system. This will provide much-needed relief throughout the community where about 10% of residents have no access to water because their wells have run dry, and others have only intermittent access.

"This drought is devastating those who live, work and raise their families in much of rural California," Vilsack said. "It is threatening the survival of whole communities and livelihoods of folks throughout the state. From Siskiyou County in the north to Kern County in the south, this disaster is crippling communities up and down the 600-mile spine of California.

"The emergency water grants we are announcing today are triple the amount we committed to when President Obama and I visited the state earlier this year," Vilsack added. "I am proud of the work USDA Rural Development staff in California and Washington, D.C., have done to get this funding to those in need and the work they have done with municipal leaders in these rural communities to help residents, businesses and agricultural producers."

Extreme weather, such as the intense drought occurring in the western United States, is putting a strain on water supplies. The Obama Administration is committed to increasing investments in the nation's water infrastructure to mitigate the impact of climate change and to ensure that all Americans have adequate, safe and reliable water supplies. The National Climate Assessment released earlier this year illustrates the impact of climate change across the country.

The 25 rural California communities are being helped by funding provided through USDA's Emergency Community Water Assistance Grant (ECWAG) program. This program helps rural communities that have experienced a significant decline in the quantity or quality of drinking water due to an emergency. In January, USDA streamlined the program's application process to expedite emergency water assistance to communities in need, particularly in drought-impacted areas.

In addition to support from the ECWAG program, USDA is helping rural communities meet their water needs through Water and Waste Disposal loans and grants and Special Evaluation Assistance for Rural Communities and Households (SEARCH) grants. USDA Rural Development has also approved grant funding to establish a revolving fund to provide low-interest loans to rural homeowners for household water wells.

The grants announced are contingent upon the recipients meeting the terms of the grant agreement.

Since the start of the Obama Administration, USDA Rural Development has invested more than $310 million to help 345,000 rural Californians receive improved water or wastewater services.

City of Corcoran Celebrates Centennial

Tina Botill

It took nine years after the City of Corcoran was founded by a group of Los Angeles investors headed by H.J. Whitley for Corcoran to become an official city.

Whitley and his group purchased 32,000 acres and Corcoran was a "planned" community in 1905. Two years later, the Santa Fe Railroad Company came to town and its transcontinental line passed through Corcoran. A "handsome" reinforced concrete station, one of the most beautiful on its line of road, cost $20,000 to build.

In 1909, a *Los Angeles Times* reporter described Corcoran as a town of 1,000 prosperous people and growing as fast as the alfalfa. Back then the greatest single enterprise was the sugar factory, the newest and most up-to-date factory of its kind in the world, the reporter said.

Whitley secured lands for more than 20 miles along the railroad. Corcoran was surrounded by beet fields, alfalfa meadows and asparagus for 20 miles in every direction. "The land here is the cream of the San Joaquin Valley, and it is all rich." The *Times* reporter wrote. Asparagus was a new crop that was being grown in Corcoran. Large quantities were shipped daily to Los Angeles, San Francisco and all other points in the Valley. Canned asparagus was one of the greatest luxuries of the age and there was a market for it "as wide as the world," and Corcoran led all others in quality.

The reporter went on to describe the houses, which were as artistic as Hollywood bungalows. He said the leaves of the beets in the earlier plantings covered the ground so that not a square inch showed. He added that the barley fields stood as straight as rushes, without a weed and up to the eyes of a six-footer.

"Corcoran Now A City of Sixth Class, Incorporates by Vote of 88-31."

That was the headline from a newspaper in July 30, 1914 just after Corcoran became a city. The article went on to say that that day Corcoran started the "wheels of progress." That same edition also announced the beginning of World War I with Austria declaring war on Serbia.

The official birthday of the City of Corcoran, according to the *Corcoran Journal* archives was August 14, 1914, the day the secretary of state in Sacramento confirmed and certified the vote and entered it into the official archives in the State Capitol.

The Occidental Hotel in Corcoran in 1915. Photo courtesy of the Corcoran Journal.

The incorporation of the J.G. Boswell Company in 1925 also provided a huge boost to the town. The J.G. Boswell Company, and other area farmers, for years fought to beat back the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi River. By the time farming began in earnest in the Tulare Lake bottom, much of the lake had dried up. However, in wet years, rain and spring run-off would see the area flood once more.

The Corcoran Chamber of Commerce back in 1920s used to hold the Cotton Festival in May during National Cotton Week. In 1925, the chamber built a float depicting a ship built of cotton, which won acclaim locally and also won a sweepstakes award in San Francisco.

Other popular events included the rabbit drives, which were held frequently. Jackrabbits were so numerous as to be a pest and very destructive to crops. It was said that 12 jackrabbits could eat as much as one cow. Thousands of rabbits were killed in the drives, and after dressing, the meat was shipped to San Francisco where it was said to be the key ingredient in making "chicken" tamales. Local rodeos were also very popular and were held at the home of Verdo Gregory.

Fast-forward 50 years and the "wheels of progress" continued to turn. Corcoran's population reached 5,066 residents. The fire department, according Albert F. Kessler, the city fire chief, said that Corcoran grew from a one truck-volunteer unit to five paid personnel plus volunteers. The Corcoran Police Department in 1914 had one law enforcement officer and a City Marshal, who performed his duties without the aid of an automobile. In 1964, the local police department grew to 12 people. There were only two patrol cars, which were manned 24 hours a day. The police department also manned the ambulance as an additional service to the people of Corcoran.

In 1964, the Corcoran City Council was also "looking ahead" and initiated a "Comprehensive Capital" improvement program encompassing streets, curbs and gutters, storm drains, sanitary sewers, parks and recreation facilities, and water storage and distribution expansion, which would be completed by the city public works department. The city also sought the long planned improvement to Dairy Avenue, new and modern residential street lighting, new reflective street signs throughout the city, and extension and expansion of sewer and water mains.

Fast-forward the "wheels of progress" another 50 years and it's 2014, the computer age. The age of emails, cell phones, lap tops, iPads, etc. The City of Corcoran now boasts a population of 22,515, which includes the addition of inmates in two prisons, California State Prison – Corcoran and the Substance Abuse Treatment Facility and State Prison.

The local fire station is a substation of the Kings County Fire Department. Today, the Corcoran Fire Substation employs nine as well as volunteers. The Corcoran Police Department now has a staff of 21.

Corcoran no longer houses a grain mill or a sugar factory. However, the city is still surrounded by lush green fields of cotton, alfalfa, corn, tomatoes and pistachio trees. It is still the farming capital of California and in keeping up with technology and the 21st century, some of those farms happen to be solar panels.

Corcoran is still a small town in the truest sense. Its main street is filled with mom and pop shops. People knows their neighbors. Businesses greet their customers by their first names.

See **CENTENNIAL EVENTS** on **7 »**

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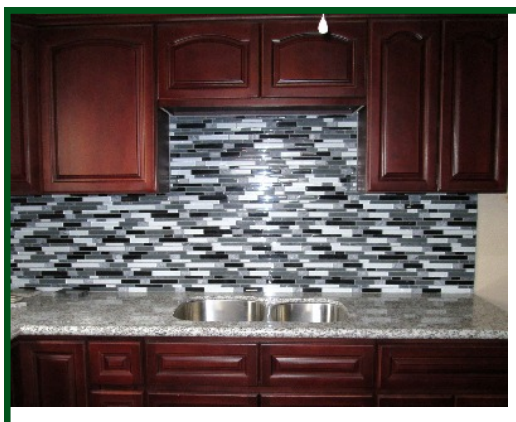
The information in this report is deemed to be reliable, but cannot be guaranteed. This condition applies generally throughout the report and specifically to square footage calculations.



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Corcoran Centennial Schedule of Events

Local Bingo enthusiasts will have the chance to win prizes at the Summerfest Bingo event. Bingo will be held in the Veterans Hall in Corcoran on Saturday, Aug. 9, from 2-5pm, with doors opening at 1:30pm. Bingo will be open to anyone age 18 years and older. Currently, advanced bingo packets are on sale. Packets are $10 and include a set of nine games and a free soft drink. They are available at the Corcoran Chamber of Commerce office at 1040 Whitley Ave.

Summerfest will feature the 2014 Aftershock car show, which begins at 3pm. A huge variety of cars will be on display on Whitley Avenue. The Aftermath Car Club is organizing and the event and they expect to have over 400 cars in this year's show.

A chili and salsa cook-off will be held at John Maroot Park. Teams compete for a custom-made trophy. Categories include chili, chili with beans and salsa. There will also be awards for Best Decorated Booth and Best Team Name.

There will also be activities for children including an ice cream contest along with food and craft vendors, a beer and wine garden for the adults and live music will be provided by Nubreed.

The popular Beer Tasting event is back and once again will be sponsored by Budweiser. Ticket holders can enjoy 14 microbrews and will receive a free souvenir glass. Advanced tickets are $20 or $25 the day of the event.

For more information regarding vendor booths, for beer tasting tickets or to register a team for the Chili and/or Salsa Cook-Off, contact Lisa Shaw at 992-4514.

The City of Corcoran's Centennial Celebration will include a 5K Run sponsored by United Health Centers on Saturday, Aug. 9. To register for the race online visit http://www.active.com/corcoran-ca/running/corcoran-centennial-5k-run-2014?int=72-2-A2.

The celebration will continue Sunday, Aug. 10, with a Heritage Ride, music and a Fireworks Extravaganza at the Recreation Association of Corcoran (RAC), 900 Dairy Ave. There will also be free swim and sack races, a treasure hunt and an egg toss starting at 2pm. The Kate Boswell Senior Center will be open as a cooling station from 1-4pm.

Sunday evening will include a performance by the Corcoran Centennial Symphony Orchestra, with artists specially comprised for the event. The 35-piece orchestra will be at the amphitheater by the soccer fields and will play from 7-8:30pm. At dusk, the fireworks show will begin. Residents are encouraged to bring their blankets and picnic baskets to enjoy the show. The fireworks will be a low-profile show, meaning for optimal view they should head over the RAC.

The Centennial Celebration will culminate on Monday, Aug. 11, as the city will hold its official Centennial Event in front of the old City Hall, 1033 Chittenden Ave. Activities include a balloon release, opening of a time capsule and the presentation of resolutions.

For more information on city activities, call 992-2151.

The new El Pollo Loco restaurant in Visalia.

El Pollo Loco Restaurant Finally Opens in Visalia

Steve Pastis

El Pollo Loco opened its newest location at 3704 S. Mooney Blvd. on August 1st. The restaurant chain is known for its citrus-marinated fire-grilled chicken and handcrafted entrees inspired by traditional Mexican recipes.

"It's fantastic," said Michele Borrayo, area leader, about the response the new restaurant was receiving on its first day. "People are excited and so are we. Visalia has been waiting for this for a long time."

El Pollo Loco has been planning to come to Visalia since 2009, according to Borrayo, who also oversees four corporate locations in Fresno, two in Clovis and one in Hanford. (The Porterville restaurant is a franchise.)

The new location has 50 employees, with about 10 of them working full time, including cooks and full-time food preparers, such as burrito makers, which Borrayo described as "a very intensive position. Seventy percent of our business is burritos, tacos and salads."

And El Pollo Loco just added a new cheese enchilada to its menu, with the Visalia restaurant the first one of its locations to serve it. Other El Pollo Loco restaurants will have to wait two weeks until the next menu cycle begins to add it to their offerings.

The new restaurant offered no opening day specials, however.

"There are always specials," said Borrayo. "We currently have a three-course family meal for $20 with eight pieces of chicken, cheese enchiladas, tortillas, rice and beans."

The Mooney Boulevard location is expected to be the only El Pollo Loco serving Visalia for the forseeable future.

"I don't know of any future plans for starting one in this area," said David Aguilera, director of operations for an area that includes parts of California and Nevada.

El Pollo Loco ("The Crazy Chicken" in English) opened its first restaurant in 1980 in Los Angeles. There are currently more than 400 company-owned and franchised restaurants in California, Arizona, Nevada, Texas and Utah.

The Visalia El Pollo Loco will serve customers from 10am to 11pm seven days a week, with a drive-up window and with dine-in service concluding one hour prior to closing. The restaurant also offers catering for special events and celebrations.

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Costco Store Approved in East Hanford

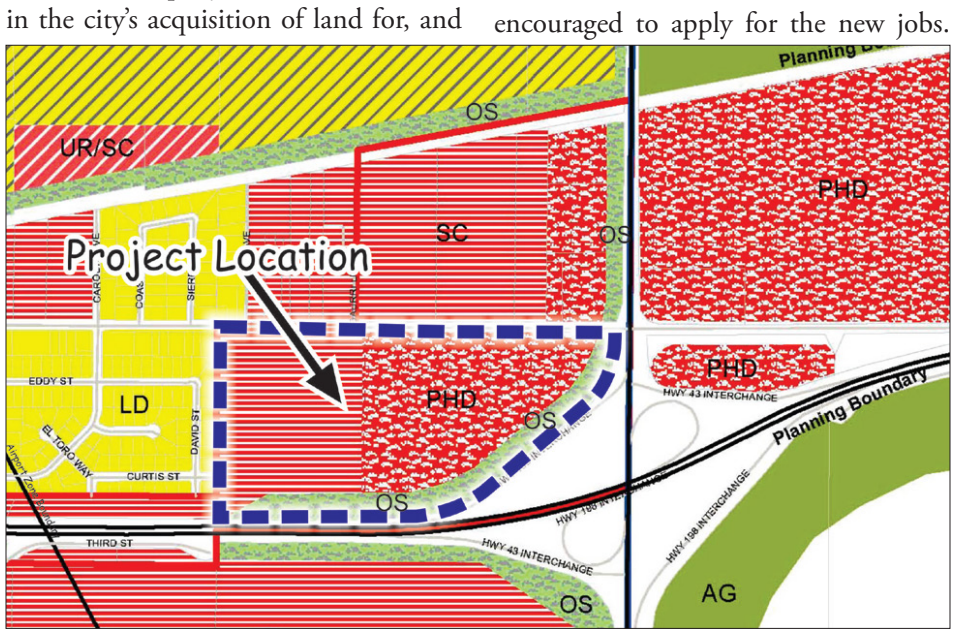
Staff Reports

At a special meeting held on July 24, the Hanford City Council unanimously approved the 58-acre "Highway 43/198 Commercial Project" on the north side of State Route 198, just west of Highway 43. The master-planned development includes a new Costco store in the new commercial center.

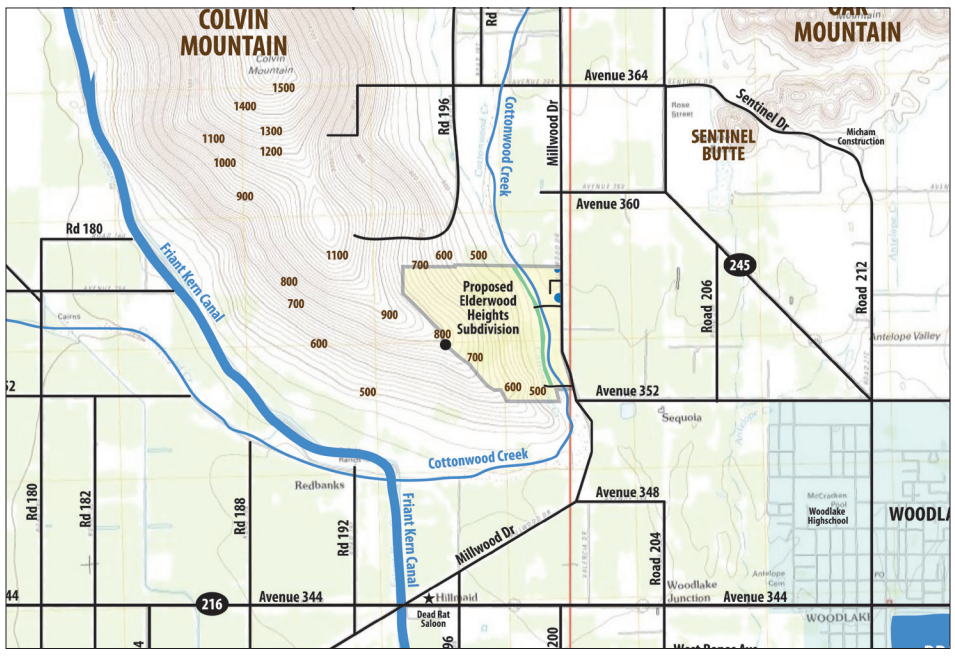
At the hearing, 198/43, LLC's representative, Rick Telegan, objected to a last-minute condition of approval proposed by city staff for the benefit of Helena Chemical Company to require construction of a cul-de-sac on the north side of East Lacey Boulevard to accommodate the company's numerous trucks. After consulting with the city attorney, the council referred the matter to city staff to prepare a bilateral agreement with the chemical company which would result in the city's acquisition of land for, and construction of, the cul-de-sac on the adjoining property. The agreement will be brought to the council for further action.

Also, council members reluctantly consented to Caltrans' requirement for the construction of a roundabout at the intersection of East Lacey Boulevard and State Route 43, over objections by Mayor Gary Pannett. Public Works Director John Doyel explained that Caltrans is committed to its analysis that a roundabout would reduce traffic accidents at that location. Finally, the council approved a 10-year sales tax sharing agreement between the city and the owner of the project property to share equally the cost of new infrastructure needed for the project.

According to project developer John Kashian, Costco plans to open by the end of 2015. Costco's representative assured the council that local residents would be encouraged to apply for the new jobs.



A map showing the location of the approved commercial center.



A map showing the location of the proposed Elderwood Heights subdivision.

Elderwood

Continued from p. 1

potential runoff into the nearby creek.

"I don't think anyone here is against a certain amount of growth," he said, but described the planned project as in "the wrong place and the wrong time."

Lauri Segrue-Polly noted how much unsold property there is currently in the City of Woodlake, and suggested that the new development may have a large number of empty houses.

"This is an agricultural property and should stay that way for years to come," argued Peggy Hunt, suggesting that the RMA should consider rezoning it that way. "The area is very rural."

Elderwood Heights has neighbors who oppose the development.

Sandy Maskal read a statement focusing on the site's flora and fauna, on behalf of a biologist familiar with the area. "There should be a thorough biological study of the area before the project can move forward. The property developer should pay to conduct a wetlands delineation survey."

Craig Breon, the attorney for Citizens Against Elderwood Heights Subdivision, was critical of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document about the site, calling it "severely flawed" and "internally inconsistent." He was also critical of the development's water usage estimate. "It's a poorly done CEQA document and you should reject it," he said, before echoing the call to the RMA to rezone the property as agricultural.

David Roberts of R7 Enterprises, the family business that plans to develop the property, talked about his family, which has been in Tulare County since 1976, about the family business and about Elderwood Heights.

"It would give 162 families the opportunity to live the kind of life we all like near Woodlake," he said. The development "would be built in 10 phases so there wouldn't be a phase started and left lingering. The rest of the property would be farmed."

Roberts said that every effort was made to work with county staff for the project. "After eight years of complying, we still have not moved forward. We have substantial time and money invested in this project.

"Many of those who spoke live in parcels made possible based on this type of development," he said, adding, "The property is zoned for residential use and has been since the '70s. The project is not only a dream of the Roberts family, but would benefit the County of Tulare and the City of Woodlake."

Roberts family attorney Shani Jenkins disagreed with earlier comments about the quality of the property for ag purposes. "They're probably limited to five crops that can grow on their property."

Bill Roberts of Roberts Engineering of Porterville, one of the developers, disputed the earlier water concerns, saying that "an extensive study" showed there was adequate water on the property. "The water level has not dropped significantly in the past 50 years." He added that development plans included the use of septic tanks that would "recycle the water right on site."

After the board moved on to other items, project opponent Diane Searcy and developer David Roberts spoke briefly and cordially outside the building. Roberts told Searcy he was open to dialog about Elderwood Heights.

West Nile Virus Earlier and Faster this Year

Steve Pastis

The West Nile Virus got off to an early start in Tulare County this year with the first discovery occurring at the beginning of May, according to Michael Alburn, general manager of the Delta Vector Control District.

"Normally, we expect to see West Nile Virus in the third week of June," he said, before offering a possible explanation for this year. "We believe it is because of the drought has had a significant impact on water. That created a situation where mosquitos and birds are cohabiting. Mosquitos prefer to feed on birds so the (West Nile Virus) cycle has been amplified. I also believe there's a spillover of mosquitos from the rural areas to the urban."

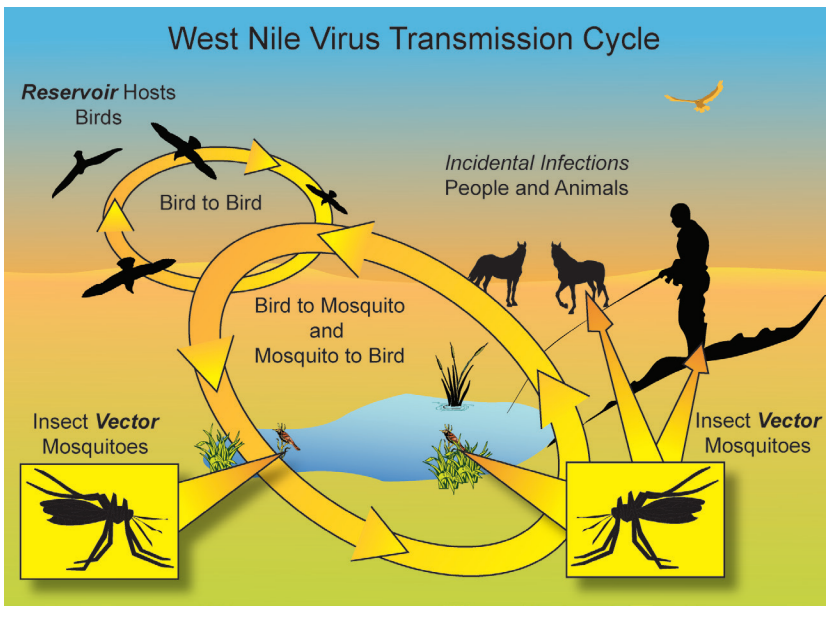
The district has also noted another significant change in West Nile Virus this year. "Instead of a 12-14 day incubation, it had been reduced to 7-8 days," Alburn said. "The cycle has been amplified."

But not all the indicators are cause for alarm.

"There's been three cases so far, which is not that unusual," said Tulare County Health Officer Karen Haught, M.D., "but there's been quite a few dead birds and mosquito pools." She said this year could show an increase in the virus, "but it's a little bit too early to tell."

When asked how this year compared with previous years, Alburn said, "Some have been more challenging. Some have been less challenging."

The main role of the Delta Vector Control District is to identify mosquito populations that involve or transmit diseases. "We're trapping mosquitos every single day," said Alburn. "With our new lab, we know the results of the testing in 24 hours and we react accordingly."



One possible reaction is to return to the site with adulticide, an insecticide used to kill adult insects, said Alburn. "But principally, our role is to repress mosquitos in the larval state."

The information the district receives from people is "a better indicator" of a mosquito problem than the many traps it has set up around the county, according to Alburn. "People who are sitting outside everyday are a great reporting mechanism," he said. "When someone is having a barbecue and having mosquitos bother them, call us (732-8606) and let us know."

"The most important thing is the prevention," said Haught, who offered advice on what people can do to fight West Nile Virus. "They should drain any standing water. They should keep screens on windows. They should avoid dusk and dawn when mosquitos are most active, and keep arms and legs covered during those times."

She defines standing water to include "a bucket with just a little bit of water, or water that doesn't drain properly."

"These reported West Nile virus cases remind us that taking a few minutes to protect ourselves and our families from mosquito bites can make a big difference," said Dr. Ron Chapman, director of the California Department of Public Health and state health officer. "West Nile Virus activity is greatest during the summer."

West Nile virus is transmitted to humans and animals with the bite of an infected mosquito. The risk of serious illness to most people is low, but some individuals--less than 1%--develop a serious neurologic illness such as encephalitis or meningitis. People 50 and older have a higher chance of getting sick and are more likely to develop complications. Those with diabetes or hypertension are at greatest risk for serious illness.

COS' Allen Named ABCA Pacific Division Coach of 2014

Capping the best baseball season in more than 40 years and one of the best in College of the Sequoias' history, Jody Allen has been named the American Baseball Coaches Association's Pacific Division Coach of the Year.

Allen is the first Central Valley Conference coach to win this ABCA honor.

The 2014 Giants finished third in California, going 34-13 overall, and won the Central Valley Conference, going 20-5 in league play.

COS landed three players on the all-state team and two players on the all-Northern California team. Allen was Northern California's Coach of the Year.

Giants were named Central Valley Conference Pitcher of the Year and Most Valuable Player. Five Giants were named first-team all-conference, another was named second-team all-conference, and two Giants were named to the CVC gold-glove team. Allen was also CVC Coach of the Year.

Allen was already COS' all-time winningest baseball coach with a 534-366-3 record.

Huge Fine

Continued from p. 4

full amount. Council Member Greg Collins spoke sympathetically of Ms. Trevino's situation and thought a lot about his vote later that night. His final decision to support the fine was based on the neighborhood. "If I were a neighbor I would be upset. Maybe it would be better for her to move."

Council Member Any Shuklian mused out loud that Trevino had actually been out of compliance since September of 2013. At $500 a day, she should have been charged $70,000. The municipal code for Trevino's violations allows the city to charge $500 a day with a cap of 30 days, which is $14,300.

Vice Mayor Warren Gubler was the lone vote against the fine, preferring to cut the amount in half and setting up payments that the homeowner might be able to afford. According to County Tax Assessor Rita Woodward, the city could always change its mind in the future and cancel the fine or amend it. With Trevino juggling whether to pay her mortgage or electricity bill, it's unknown whether she would be able to pay the fine even if it were cut in half.

How do the neighbors feel about what the city has labeled a "nuisance" property? Well that depends on who you talk to. It's an all-American neighborhood with a mix of professions, ethnicities, and ages. A sheriff lives three doors down from Trevino's house and he understandably wants her to leave. Other neighbors see Abigail as an asset to the community, helping out those in need and volunteering at her church. One neighbor chased me down the street to tell me that "everyone on the block loves her." He said that Abigail is a wonderful lady and that he didn't agree with the city's decision.

Among the residents I spoke with, there was a huge divide in opinion between those who had lived in the neighborhood for years versus the newcomers. The newcomers loved her and wanted the city instead to shut down the apparent meth house down the street. Those who remember the drive-by shootings and possible gang activities wanted her to leave, and according to the city staff, were afraid for their lives.

When asked what else the city could have done in Trevino's case, Robertshaw stated, "What haven't we done? I thought outside the box for the first 17 code violations. For the 18th, we decided to enforce the full weight of the fines to get her to comply." Robertshaw explained that she has devoted many hours to work with Trevino but that, "she has taken advantage of our kindness. At some point she needs to take accountability."

The Visalia Police Department utilizes the Lenco Bearcat as part of its SWAT operations.

The question is: Should Visalia charge such a large amount that Trevino will lose her home? The city's goal was to curb her family's bad behavior, possibly encourage her to move, and recoup some of the police and administrative costs, none of which can now happen. Until 2020, when the home will be sold by the county because of the tax lien, Trevino has nothing to lose, and it is unclear how the city will deal with code violations at her residence in the future.

As a city employee for Exeter, Collins has been through a similar situation. He said that Visalia has very few options now if there are future code violations at Trevino's residence. Trevino cannot be evicted because she owns the home.

While sitting on her couch I looked around at some of her memorabilia. Above what might have been an entertainment center overburdened with a life of collecting papers and knickknacks was a colorized picture of her mother and a gold-framed picture of her three sons in a more innocent time. Abigail's American dream of working hard, raising a family, and buying a home, for her, had turned into an American tragedy.

Raise

Continued from p. 1

demands. During their public comments Cox pointed out that the county employees never mentioned that Supervisors Steve Worthley and Vander Poel declined the pay raises offered them.

Referring to the SEIU, Cox said, "It was a well-orchestrated plot to discredit the supervisors and I'm not a conspiracy theorist."

Saying that the county offered nothing during the first round of contract negotiations, Cox felt was an outright lie. He explained that the county offered, in the first two rounds of negotiations, to pay the rising healthcare premiums of employees with a $1,000 deductable and to pay for the Animal Shelter employees' uniforms. "That's not offering 'nothing,'" said Cox. "When you are a bad actor it just makes you look bad. A lot of the public comments made were inappropriate and inaccurate and we just had to sit there and take it."

Unlike the Service Employees International Union, the supervisors did not want to comment to the press or the public while the negotiations were in process.

As far as the county's negotiating team, Cox felt that they made no misleading comments nor said any half-truths.

Cox said that it was always the county's plan to offer a 3% raise. "You stand in a hole and they shoot for the moon, then you come together in the middle. That's how it works. To negotiate in good faith you have to show movement." He went on, "I hate to compare them to children but their negotiating team came ill-prepared." He said he could also sense dissention between the union and the rank-and-file employees.

Cox's assessment of how a negotiating process should work is exactly what happened. The county started low and the SEIU started high. The SEIU workers started off in late March by asking for an 8.74% raise over the course of three years. They based their request on what the supervisors had given themselves - except for Worthley and Vander Poel. On the other side of the table, the county offered to pay for uniforms and cover increases in health care premiums for those with a $1,000 deductable.

Negotiations stalled during the subsequent meetings. The employees continued to request for a pay raise but the county didn't look like they were going to budge from their 0% offer. As a strategy to get the negotiations moving, several county employees spoke during public comment at the June 3rd supervisors' meeting. They also organized a protest during the special night supervisors meeting the following week. The county employees took a trip to Sacramento the next day to talk to the Joint State Legislative Audit Committee to ask if Tulare County could be put on their agenda for possible mismanagement of funds.

The day after returning from Sacramento, the TCBOS offered a one-year contract at a 3% raise. The employees countered with a 5% raise and a $1,000 payout for all employees as a consolation for not getting a raise for the past six years. The county said no, and the employees then asked for a 3% raise with a $500 payout to which the county also said no. According to Kermit Wullschleger, a member of the employee negotiating team, when they calculated the lost wages if they did not agree to a contract now they decided to drop their request for the a payout and let the union employees vote on the county's offer.

Whereas Cox says that a 3% raise was always in the cards, SEIU feels that getting the public and media involved turned the tide in the negotiations. Whoever is correct, the entire process will start again in eight months. Wullschleger said next year's negotiations will focus on improved health benefits and equity adjustments. Wullschleger told the *Foothills Sun Gazette*, "the lowest paid employees pay the highest percentage of their health insurance while the highest paid employees pay the lowest share of health coverage.

The equity adjustments would compensate those county employees whose salaries have fallen far behind their fellow workers. Concerning the health benefits, Wullschleger said, "Because management is given more money from the county to pay for their benefits, most of them are fully covered. Non-management employees are not given as much money to cover their health insurance and land in programs with a $1,000 deductable." The result is a low wage earner with a $1,000 deductible is never going to go see a doctor unless they are dying because they can't afford the deductible.

Wullschleger expressed his motivation to be on the negotiating team. "I want people to know they have value. When I get up to speak, I am doing what I can for my fellow employees. The county does not give them the respect that they deserve. This is not just about money. This is about standing up and not just making a difference for yourself but improving the world at the same time."

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The newest Family HealthCare Network health center is at 401 E. School Ave. in Downtown Visalia.

Family HealthCare Network Opens New Community Health Center in Visalia

Staff Reports

Family HealthCare Network (FHCN) has opened its newest community health center in Visalia. After nearly 15 months of construction, the center at 401 E. School Avenue in opened full-time on July 16. The state-of-the-art health center provides the community with 34,607 square feet of new health care space.

"Family HealthCare Network is proud to offer expanded health center services in the community of Visalia," said Kerry Hydash, FHCN president and CEO.

The $9.8 million project comprises 51 exam rooms and 12 dental operatories, and offers multi-specialty services under one roof including family medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, dental, behavioral health, nutrition, health education, imaging services, on-site laboratory and community health outreach and enrollment services. The new facility also features a training room for various patient education classes that Family HealthCare Network offers to the public free of charge. The health center operates Monday through Friday 7am to 9pm, and Saturdays 8am to 5pm.

FHCN celebrated the grand opening with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on July 24.

Family HealthCare Network is a private nonprofit organization that operates federally qualified health centers. FHCN operates 18 sites, of which 14 are community health centers located in Tulare and Kings Counties. FHCN is recognized by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) as a Level 3 Patient Centered Medical Home and dually recognized by The Joint Commission with its Gold Seal of Approval for Patient Quality and Safety and as a Patient-Centered Primary Medical Home.

For more information, visit www.FHCN.org or www.Facebook.com/fhcn.org, or follow FHCN at www.Twitter.com/FHCN.

Tulare County Named Eighth Most Technologically Advanced County in U.S.

Tulare County has proven itself as one of the country's top digital leaders in local government. The county was nationally recognized as the eighth most technologically advanced county in the U.S. in the Center for Digital Government's 2014 Digital Counties Survey. Tulare County was honored at the National Association of Counties conference, which was held July 11-14 in New Orleans.

"This national recognition highlights our continued efforts towards the implementation of professional, high-quality business and technological solutions that support delivery of services, reduce costs and increase efficiencies for all residents of Tulare County," said Peg Yeates, director of Tulare County Information & Communications Technology.

The Center for Digital Government's annual survey is in its 12th year and carefully evaluates IT-related projects that involve citizen engagement, policy, operations and technology/data. The survey's top ranking counties have shown the use of best practices, modern technologies and also provide opportunities for IT growth. Counties are placed into predetermined categories based on their respective population size and Tulare County was ranked eighth in the 250,000-499,999 population category.

The IT projects that helped Tulare County achieve this honor include:

- The new web designs of www.tularecounty.ca.gov and www.aroundtularecounty.com. The new designs made the websites easier for citizens to view and access important information about the county.
- The online posting of Tulare County Board of Supervisors meetings, including the meeting dates, agendas and minutes.
- The use of WebBudget, a program that helped enhance digital tools for budget preparation.

Tulare County was also recognized for the development of new projects such as:

- The Permit and Land Management System (PALMS), which will enable better and more effective communication between county departments and will lead to improved community service.
- An updated property tax system that will streamline work flow and provide Tulare County constituents with more online services.
- A radio simulcast that will improve emergency response and operations.

The Center for Digital Government is the nation's only media and research company that exclusively focuses on state and local government and education.

In the 500,000 or more population category, state winners included San Francisco County (1st), San Diego County (3rd) and Sacramento County (4th). In the 250,000-499,000 population category, other state winners included Sonoma County (4th). For counties with up to 150,000 population, Nevada County placed 5th.

For more information, visit www.digitalcommunities.com/survey/counties.

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Briefly...

Scholarship Established for Son of Deceased COS Employee

James Heuer, 37, was a College of the Sequoias farm specialist and a former COS student who died in a farming accident July 18 at the COS Tulare College Center's farm. The accident remains under investigation.

The Heuer family has established a scholarship fund for Heuer's 7-year-old son, Ethan James Heuer, through the COS Foundation. Those interested can contribute to Ethan's education by donating to the Ethan James Heuer Scholarship Fund through the COS Foundation.

Checks should be made payable to and mailed to: The Ethan James Heuer Scholarship Fund, c/o COS Foundation, 915 S. Mooney Blvd., Visalia, CA 93277. Online donations may be made at COS.edu/Foundation.

Vice Mayor Warren Gubler to Host 'Donuts and Discussion'

Enjoy "Donuts and Discussion" with Vice Mayor Warren Gubler, Code Enforcement Manager Tracy Robertshaw and Visalia Police Lieutenant Brian Winter from 8-9:30am on Saturday, August 9, at the Lincoln Oval Park Community Center, 808 N. Court St.

This informal gathering allows any citizen to address their concerns or ask questions one-on-one with Vice Mayor Gubler. Visalia Code Enforcement and the Visalia Police Department representatives will provide updates on the city's efforts with its shopping cart ordinance, the homeless issue and the Highway 63 CalTrans road project.

First 5 Announces New Commission Chair

Cheryl Duerksen, Ph.D., director of Tulare County Health & Human Services, has been named chairman of the First 5 Tulare County Commission. Duerksen served on the Commission from 2002-2006 and returned in 2010. She will serve a two-year term, with Chair-Elect Connie Smith, administrator of the Tulare County Office of Education's Early Childhood Education Program.

Rounding out the commission are: Steve Beargeon, CEO of the Foundation for Medical Care; Maureen Bianco, American Cancer Society; Jason Britt, director of public health, Tulare County Health & Human Services; Tulare County Supervisor Phil Cox; and Christine Nelson, MD.

Ruiz Foods Honored at Fresno Food Expo

A proclamation in recognition of the 50th birthday of Ruiz Foods was presented by Fresno Mayor Swearingen to company Co-Founder and Chairman Emeritus Fred Ruiz at the Fresno Food Expo at the Fresno Convention Center on July 24.

Ruiz Foods Products, Inc. is a privately owned corporation with corporate offices in Dinuba. The company's El Monterey brand is the market leader within the frozen Mexican food category and the top brand of frozen Mexican food in the U.S. Ruiz Foods employs over 2,400 Team Members in four facilities located in the United States.

Family HealthCare Network Senior Leader Receives Honor

Family HealthCare Network announced that its chief operations officer, Norma Verduzco, MPA, recently graduated from the esteemed Clinic Leadership Institute (CLI). A project of Blue Shield of California Foundation, the program prepares emerging leaders of California community clinics and health centers to be effective and passionate agents of change in an evolving health care environment. Verduzco was honored in June in a ceremony in Los Angeles.

Verduzco was selected for the 18-month program after a rigorous screening and selection process by the Blue Shield of California Foundation. Each year, about 25 participants are selected for the CLI program, which offers an innovative, part-time training and professional development program for promising community health center leaders. Other graduates of the program include Kerry Hydash, FHCN president and CEO, and Jay Kelley, FHCN chief information officer.

Edeniq Customers to Benefit From EPA Ruling on Corn Kernel Fiber

Edeniq, Inc., a biorefining and cellulosic technology company headquartered in Visalia, welcomed the recent U.S. Environmental Protection Agency finding that corn kernel fiber qualifies as a cellulosic feedstock under the renewable fuel standard program regulations. This determination will allow the company's Pathway Platform to be used by customers to produce cellulosic ethanol inside corn ethanol plants.

Edeniq's patented platform combines its Cellunator technology with an enzyme cocktail to break down corn kernel fiber, releasing cellulosic sugars into the fermentation process. Corn kernels contain approximately 13% cellulosic fiber that remains unconverted in a typical ethanol plant.

Head Start Accepts Applications for Migrant Preschoolers and Toddlers

The Tulare County Office of Education Early Childhood Education Program (formerly known as the Child Care Educational Program) is currently accepting applications from migrant families with toddlers and preschoolers for enrollment at its Head Start-funded preschools. Migrant families must be engaged in agricultural labor and have changed their residence from one geographical location to another in the preceding two-year period. To qualify, 51% or more of the family income must come from working in agriculture. That is defined as working in row or tree crops, alfalfa or other silage crops, nurseries, packing houses, and transportation from field to packing house.

Jim Vidak, county superintendent of schools, said the program is now accepting preschoolers who are between 2.1 and 4.9 years of age as of September 1, at the centers in Cutler, Lindsay, Porterville, Earlimart and Richgrove. For more information, call 651-3026.

Hands in the Community Announces Vacation Auction

Hands in the Community is offering a one-week stay at the Cabo del Sol resort in Cabo San Lucas October 11-18. The top bidder will stay in the 1,900-square-foot Penthouse Suite, which sleeps up to 10 people. There are three bedrooms and 3½ bathrooms, two queen beds in two rooms and one king in the master. This resort also has two champion golf courses and more than 10 pools, and is a private gated community. (Michael Jordan owns a large home on the 18th hole.) The retail value of this trip is $1,900 per night.

The starting bid began at $2,000 with $500 bid increments. The final bid is considered a donation to HNC, a 501 (C) 3 non-profit organization. Bids can be made at hncvisalia@gmail.com until noon on August 18.

Central Valley Community Bancorp Reports Earnings

The board of directors of Central Valley Community Bancorp, the parent company of Central Valley Community Bank, reported unaudited consolidated net income of $5,309,000, and diluted earnings per common share of $0.48 for the six months ended June 30, 2014, compared to $3,070,000 and $0.30 per diluted common share for the six months ended June 30, 2013.

TCOE Welcomes Friday Night Live Advisors from Throughout California

The California Friday Night Live Partnership hosted a training for local Friday Night Live Partnership advisors from 53 California counties July 23-July 25 at the Visalia Marriott. The purpose of the training was to provide ongoing support to the adult staff that implements Friday Night Live Programs across the state. Approximately 150 participants attended, representing programs at more than 650 school and community sites. Attendees heard from noted researchers and youth development leaders.

Regional Smoke in Sierra Nevada Affects Local Parks

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks experienced smoke from fires burning to the north of the parks. The French Fire on the Sierra National Forest was reported on July 28th, and was estimated at 1,000 acres. The fire burned in steep, rugged terrain between the Rock Creek and Fish Creek campgrounds in the San Joaquin River drainage. In addition to the French Fire, the El Portal and Dark Hole fires burned in and near Yosemite National Park at approximately 2,700 acres and 590 acres, respectively.

Local Inventor Develops Carbon Monoxide Safety System

"I was concerned about carbon-monoxide leaks going undetected and injuring or killing a building's occupants," said an unnamed inventor from Hanford, according to an InventHelp press release. "In order to safeguard against this, I developed a safety system."

He (or she?) developed the Carbon Monoxide-Activated Gas Shut-Off Device to protect building occupants from carbon monoxide poisoning. The unit automatically shuts down a heating system or fuel-fired generator. It also sounds an audible alarm and activates a strobe light (for the hearing impaired) in the event of a carbon-monoxide leak.

This is designed to enhance personal safety and offer added peace of mind. Furthermore, the device is adaptable for use on most common designs of gas and oil-fired forced-air and hydronic heating systems. The original design was submitted to the Fresno office of InventHelp. It is currently available for licensing or sale to manufacturers or marketers. For more information, call (412) 288-1300 ext. 1368.

Home Video Studio Wins Award

Home Video Studio - Visalia won a Hanley Award at the 14th annual Home Video Studio Getaway in Orlando. Home Video Studio is the world's largest international video production services franchisor, with studios located in the United States, Canada and Sweden.

Studio owner Arthur Zepeda submitted his videos in several of the 15 award categories, competing with fellow studio owners from across North America. A judging panel selected Home Video Studio - Visalia for its submission in the "Best Studio Promotional Video" category. The video featured a description of the many video services that the local business provides to its customers.

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Parks

Continued from p. 1

arrested for certain crimes.

The council also amended park hours for Lincoln Oval Park, Pappas Park, Provident Skate Park, and Seven Oaks Park. The objective said Robertshaw, "was so families could enjoy the parks."

Under the current code, if a police officer arrested a park visitor for prostitution, or possession of drugs, they could only be banned from the park until 6am the next day. Robertshaw recounted an instance where she apprehended an individual with an illegally concealed weapon in a park. That individual was sent to jail but was back in the park three days later. Under the new ordinance, Visalia's code enforcement and the police will be able to ban such individuals for up to a year from all Visalia parks. "We know who the problem people are," said Robertshaw.

The council and staff feel that city parks are for families to enjoy and there is no reason for individuals with concealed weapons to be there. According to the staff report, "The proposed ordinance states that persons found in possession of illegal drugs, (heroin, cocaine, methamphetamines and PCP) drug paraphernalia, illegal weapons, acts of prostitution, commits a crime of violence on another person inside of a city park, or chronically violates state or municipal law would be prohibited from using any city park, trail or recreation area for a period of up to 12 months." Robertshaw added that "violators will be able to appeal the suspension by requesting an administrative hearing."

Because Lincoln Oval Park, Provident Skate Park, Pappas Park and Seven Oaks Park had significantly higher calls for service in 2013, they were targeted as good candidates for restricting their hours. Because the lighting is limited to the sidewalks, Robertshaw stated that there would be no good reason for people to be using those parks after dark. For that reason their hours will be changed to 8am to 8pm in the summer and until 6pm in the winter. All other parks will remain open from 6am to 10pm.

Each of these four parks had more than 100 calls for police service. None of the other parks in the city system had that combination. Lincoln Oval Park, as the third smallest park within the city, has both the most calls for service as well as the highest call-to-size ratio, at an average of 250 calls per acre in 2013.

Jim Chlebda: A Tribute

Trudy Wischemann

The people of Tulare & Kings Counties lost a good friend late last month. Jim Chlebda, once publisher and editor of *South Valley Arts*, took his last breath July 22 at Stanford where he'd been waiting for a new pair of lungs. Born with cystic fibrosis, Jim tripled the years a person normally lives with this disease by learning about it and doing everything within his power to maximize his health – everything, that is, except stop living a full, adventurous and generous life.

I met Jim shortly after moving to Lindsay from Davis in 1993, when he was editing *Southland Magazine* out of Springville. Although a newcomer to the region, I'd studied its agricultural history and development patterns for twenty years and wanted to write about these things to the residents of this place. Jim responded enthusiastically to my essays, laid them out beautifully and gave them the centerfold spot in the publication. He was my first real editor, as well as my first friend here.

He was both to many people, including Porterville's Jeremy Hogan, who got his start in photojournalism when Jim invited the teenager to shoot covers for Southland. But even more, he was an advocate for the arts in a rural region where artists range far and wide to find a place to publish, a venue to show, an audience to appreciate, and a community to support the work of truth-telling about rural life and our precious environment. When *Southland* became *South Valley Arts* in 1994, he tied all those things together and strengthened the place of rural voices in this region.

He became a publisher of books when Okie poet Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel convinced him that was his calling. In all, he published 13 of her books of poetry and prose, including his irreplaceable collection of her work, *Walking on an Old Road*, completed shortly after her death in 2007. There are three chapbooks of poetry from Modesto poet Lillian Vallee, 2 by Yaqui poet Manny Moreno from Livingston, and other storytellers spread from Sonoma County to Kern. The list includes his own chapbook *Greetings from the Foothill Plane*t, which he, as a graphic artist, modestly subtitled "Sketches in Verse." (Visit www.back40publications.com for a window on his work.)

His biggest accomplishment in my mind, however, was the way he lived his life. Slender, all muscle and bone, his small frame contained more energy, fueled by more heart and faith, than 10 normal people. His friendship was the closest thing to unconditional love I've ever known, and he was that way with everyone. Few people knew that he lived every day of his life with a disease that would eventually kill him; in embracing his disease, he embraced his life more fully than most people born with decent genes can summon. Even this last year, much of it spent tethered to an oxygen tank, he had more vitality than I feel on a good day.

This spring, the doctors at Stanford discovered the antibiotics had stopped working against the bacteria that takes over the lungs, and thus the lives, of people with CF. On July 11th, for multiple reasons, Jim was removed from the list for a double lung transplant. As we, his widespread friends, moved into shock, Jim moved into the only course of action left: to die on his own terms. "I guess now I have to go through this other window, Trudy-bud," he said in our last phone call.

After Jim's death, cowboy poet and fellow publisher John Dofflemyer said "He was a force in many people's lives." John added: "Now he can operate with a freer hand." Close friends who knew how lovingly he served as a stand-in son to Wilma, a spinster, have said he's with her now. I think he's up at Back 40, the place high in the North Fork Tule watershed where he lived when I first met him, communing with the land and its wildlife without worry about property lines or deeds. But I really don't know where he is, except sometimes he seems to be right here with me.

What I do know, however, and know better now than ever before, is that when he walked this planet, the kingdom of heaven was near. He brought it with him everywhere he went, sowing seeds of kindness and appreciation, love and respect. The pearls of great price he found on every nature walk, in every poet's corner, every encounter with the unconformed and wandering souls who became his friends – those pearls are shining now, right here on earth.

So if you happen to see Jim, say hello - and Thanks.

Trudy Wischemann is a writer and columnist who lives in Lindsay. You can view some of her work at www.trudysnotes-fromhome.blogspot.com.

(Note: Friends are hoping to have a memorial celebration in Springville sometime in the next few weeks. For more information contact Kathy at kateveret@aol.com or 359-0463.)

Brett Taylor

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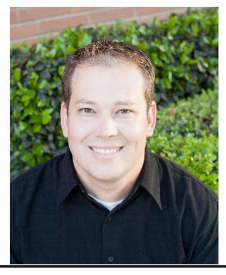

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Viewpoint

New Report Exposes Growing Militarization of American Policing

Brian J. Trautman

Last month, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) released a report titled "War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Policing," shedding much-needed light on the emergence of a militarist ethos in policing across the nation. In a review of public records, such as incident reports, requested from more than 260 law enforcement agencies in 25 states and the District of Columbia, the ACLU found that, from the responses received, 818 SWAT operations from 20 local law enforcement agencies located in 11 states fully met their research criteria, which took geographic diversity into account, among other factors. The SWAT incidents that were analyzed fell in the time period between July 2010 and last October. Based on the ACLU's examination, it was determined that paramilitary policing is neither sporadic nor isolated; rather, it is widespread and pervasive. Perhaps the most eye-opening and disturbing aspects of the ACLU's report are the revelations of when, why and how Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams are being used.

The trend toward hyper-aggressive tactics of today's law enforcement are having tragic consequences for both civilians and law officers. Property is being destroyed. Civil liberties are being violated. SWAT teams are employing methods and equipment that have traditionally been reserved for war. For example, roughly 500 law enforcement agencies now possess Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles built to withstand armor-piercing roadside bombs. According to the report, the root causes of the excessive militarization of policing and its reshaping of cultural values are numerous. They include the "War on Drugs," the events of September 11, 2001, and a series of Supreme Court decisions which have eroded the rights guaranteed in the Fourth Amendment and given police unprecedented access to private homes.

The report cites several incidents in which crime suspects or their family members have either been injured or killed during SWAT raids. These include the killing of a 26-year-old mother holding her infant son; the killing of a 68-year-old grandfather; a flashbang grenade severely burning a toddler in a crib; and, the shooting (22 times) of a 26-year-old Iraq war veteran. The ACLU also learned of various instances in which SWAT teams deployed when children were on the premises, sometimes when police had advanced warning that children would be on site. And it was not uncommon, the ACLU discovered, for family pets to be needlessly shot during raids.

There are five primary findings presented in the report:

1. The excessive militarization of American policing has largely been the result of federal programs that have incentivized the use of "unnecessarily aggressive weapons and tactics designed for the battlefield."

2. There has been virtually no public oversight concerning the militarization of American policing.

3. In the majority of cases, SWAT teams were deployed to execute search warrants in low-level drug investigations, whereas traditional uses of SWAT (in hostage or barricade scenarios) totaled considerably fewer cases: According to the ACLU, "SWAT teams were more than twice as likely to force entry into a person's home when searching for drugs than for other deployments."

4. People of color were disproportionately impacted by paramilitary weapons and tactics and were the primary targets of drug searches.

5. War-like tactics and equipment are unnecessary and increase the risk of harm to people and damage to property.

The report also includes a number of recommendations. These include:

- Because the militarization of policing has permeated American society, systemic reform including a transformation in police culture is needed.
- Different agencies of the federal government are responsible for the trend of aggressive policing. Accordingly, reform should occur throughout government. Programs that incentivize the militarization of policing must be curtailed.
- Probable cause must not be the sole justification for SWAT teams to enter homes, even in cases when a search warrant has been issued.
- Appropriate restraints of SWAT should be developed by state legislatures and municipalities.
- Local police departments should develop internal policies and training that restrain officers and discourage a "warrior" mindset.

As mentioned earlier, the ACLU sought public records from law enforcement agencies nationwide to gain better insight into police capabilities and behavior. Not every state cooperated. For example, law enforcement councils in Massachusetts refused to release this information, claiming that they were not government agencies but private, non-profit organizations, thus exempt from public record laws. Law enforcement in the state has ostensibly turned to privatization of policing to avoid transparency and accountability. The encouraging news is that in a press release dated June 24, the ACLU of Massachusetts announced they had filed a lawsuit against the North Eastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (NEMLEC) for records on their SWAT activities, arguing that the "NEMLEC operates with all of the privileges of a law enforcement agency, and like a law enforcement agency, it should be accountable to the public."

Modern policing, which frequently treats citizens like enemies of the state, should deeply concern every American, regardless of political affiliation. Over the past two decades, the violent crime rate in the United States has decreased sharply. Innovations in computer technology have provided law enforcement with new crime prevention tools, especially in surveillance. The excessive militarization of American policing, then, is counterintuitive. The drug war and counter-terrorism efforts may represent two of the official justifications for current trends in policing. Historically, however, nations have militarized their police to rapidly quell potential mass civil uprisings against tyranny and injustice. Whatever the reasoning, abusive, hyper-aggressive policing against communities, particularly economically disadvantaged communities of color, as well as the stripping of civil liberties, are real threats to freedom and democracy and thus urgently require serious national attention and meaningful action.

Brian J. Trautman writes for PeaceVoice, is a military veteran, an instructor of peace studies at Berkshire Community College in Pittsfield, MA, and a peace activist.

My Freshman Year

Mercedes Oldenbourg

Freshman year--a fairly strange time when new experiences are being made, different things are being learned, and things you've never noticed before are finally being noticed. At first, being a freshman was scary, and I had no idea what I was doing.

People would tell me in eighth grade that the upperclassmen would do swirlies on me in the toilets, and throw me headfirst into the garbage cans just for being a freshman. That made me very nervous, and I honestly thought I would die in high school.

My first day of school my mother dropped me off. I've never been more scared in my life. My heart was beating louder than a phonebook in a dryer. Seeing the older kids made it worse, and I thought I would never be able to find my first period class. Sure enough I did find my class, and when I sat down, I looked around at everyone that I had to deal with for the next year. To be honest they weren't the nicest looking people, but as the year went on I grew to like them all. The day went on, and finally it was lunchtime.

At Exeter Union High School, we get to leave campus for lunch, so as you can imagine it wasn't that easy trying to find my friends. When the bell rang for lunch, I got that terrible feeling again like when my mom dropped me off. I had no idea where to go, I didn't even know where I was myself. But everything always works out, and I found a friend to go with. The bell rang for lunch to be over, and I went to the rest of my classes.

When my parents picked me up after school, I sat in the backseat and realized something as I was thinking about my day. High school is nothing like they said! Nobody throws you in the garbage, everyone just avoids freshmen. And then it hit me. I have to deal with all this nonsense for the next four years! Yikes! Time really does fly though.That year went by faster than I thought it would. I grew closer to new friends and teachers as the year passed by, and that made each day a little better. Things became more familiar, and everything became more comfortable.

On the last day of freshman year, while hearing the classic song that the seniors practice graduation to, I started to feel sad. I didn't want to say goodbye to this year just yet. There were so many memories made, I wanted to make more. I just got the hang of high school, why does it have to stop now? And the worst part was thinking I'm probably not going to get one of my favorite teachers again.

I really like Exeter Union High School, there are alot of nice kids there. And since I'm only going to be a sophomore, I'm only going to get to know the school better and make even more great friends. Sadly, in a few short years, I will no longer be at Exeter High School. I will be graduating with the class of 2017!

Exeter Union starting school in a few days now, and I can't wait to finally go back. It's probably rare that you will ever hear a teenager say something like that--that they would ever want to go back to school. But I just love having my friends all in one spot where we can see each other almost every day, and learning new things. Some kids just don't see the good things like that in school, and take everything for granted.

Summer Facility Projects

Craig Wheaton, Ed.D.

The week before school started I toured the district to do a last minute check on some of VUSD's summer facility projects. The summer is always a time when we catch up on roof repair, painting, traffic circulation, and parking lot improvements. This year was no exception, and it was a real rush to get as much done as we could before the first day of school.

As a result of the 2012 approval of Measure E, I have had some questions about our summer work and, frankly, some expectation about having more projects underway. I found myself reminding everyone about the Measure E promise, "If we pass Measure E, VUSD will take the next two years to plan and prepare for needed projects and bring in matching state funds to complete them." We are in that two-year planning window with several projects.

First, the design of a new middle school is well on its way--the final plans are at the Department of State Architect's Office for final approval. We are on schedule and hope to begin ground infrastructure work in the next couple of months. Full construction should begin by winter so that we can have the school built and open by August 2016.

The 16-classroom building for Redwood High School is in the construction stage. It will replace the eight portable classrooms now located near the corner of Conyer and Main Streets. We expect to have that completed by next August. Both of these projects will help relieve the overcrowding in the northwest portion of our community.

Measure E is not just about new construction. More than two-thirds of the expected funding will go to needed improvement of our older schools all across the community. This summer there were a number of schools painted (Mountain View, Green Acres, Royal Oaks, Crestwood and Linwood) and many roofs repaired.

One important improvement to many of our schools is around campus security. We are retrofitting many older campuses so that once school begins, visitors will be required to enter the school through one access point, usually through the school office. This required some changes in fencing; and in some cases, office remodels. A good example of this can be seen at La Joya, El Diamante, Hurley, Elbow Creek and Mountain View--or for one of our more extensive projects, Conyer and Mineral King.

The summer is over, but we are busy preparing for future Measure E projects. Many will be completed during the summer, but a number of the projects will require some inconveniences during school time. The inconvenience will be greatly outweighed by the improved facility once it is done.

So I will say this once again, "Hold on to your 'hard' hats; we are in for a couple of years of renovation and reconstruction!"

Columns & Letters

Online Comments

Comment at ourvalleyvoice.com or fb.me/ourvalleyvoice

"The Circus Comes to Porterville:

Mystery number three is why waste city time taking applications when the voters have already chosen Mr. McCracken's replacement?"

the voters did not choose mr mcracken replacement LOL

the june 3rd election has nothing to do with this

if the voters really wanted mr green then the vote would of went to him but it didn't , there has never been election were a someone that has came in 3rd has won over 1st and 2dn lol
the city charter state that this must be done by appointment or the mayor can pick with in 30 days,

and the people of porterville wanted the "new blood" on council, if you look how they did the appointments that took 7 arounds you can see what happen and why mr green was not picked he can run again or put his name back in for January or nov 2016,

"A lot happened at the July 1st Porterville City Council meeting. First they picked newly elected Milte Stowe as mayor, someone who won a commanding percent of the vote, but has no experience being on a council or even any of their committees"

he has more experience than mr green that's for sure, and for mr ward he never wanted the mayor seat and will never take it due to his health issues and religious beliefs, mayor stowe has work for parks and rec and many other things around porterville, mr green we no nothing about but that he is in school and law clerking and that he is at such a young age an ex portervile police det. and never gives any other job history nor real examples of why and how he would have been the peoples choice oh just cuz i came in 3rd and a good man has die doesn't cut"

— ***alex station**, on **Political Fix (17 July 2014)***

"Learn proper English!"

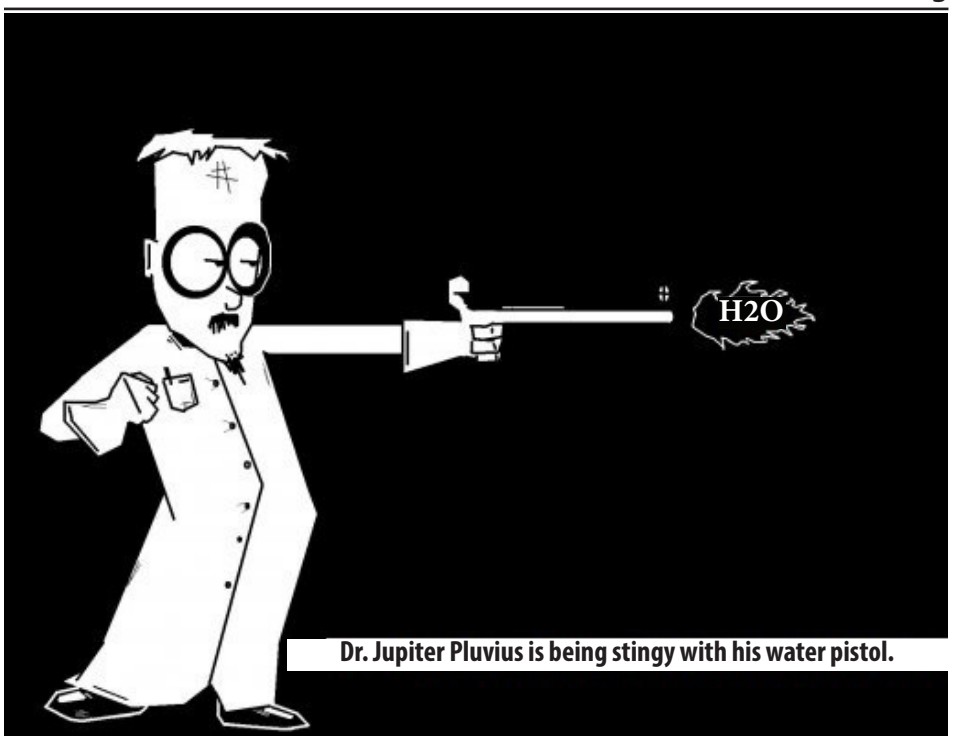
— ***Melissa**, on **Political Fix (17 July 2014)***

"Mr. Station: Thank you for your reply, it was well received and welcomed. From our conversation, I seem to think that we both agree on several topics and this is the way that most intelligent men can come to agreements and move forward to try and fix things, and for this I give you "props". But just to stand correct, this was my first time to run for the Porterville City Council, and I took interest only because of the many things that I see wrong within the city government. And as for Mr. Greens' position and from my point of view. I still feel that the next highest vote getter should have been appointed. Why?, because of the principles of a democratic form of government. I personally, to think that the vote of 4 council members should not have prevailed over the vote of hundreds of other citizens. If we wanted to take it a step further, we could say that the 4 council members gained an extra priveliege that you and I did not get, and that was to vote twice.In regards to the "undocumented" analogy, I still feel that mr. reyes did not earn the position, it was simply hand down to him, like an old pair of shoes would be handed down to a sibling or as a token recogniztion or moreover, the bottom of the barrel stock, (NOTHING TO BE PROUD OF). You mention three issues of concern: 1. water; as much money as the city allocates to the limited use of the golf course, maybe they should have invested in more reservoirs. The Chamber of Commerce audit reports for the last 4 years, indicate that the Chamber makes over $300,000.00 yearly. Maybe we should have used the yearly $35,000.00 the city contributes to the Chamber on other water projects. I personally asked 13 businesses within the Main Street area, if they were members of the Chambers', even I was surprised, when they said HECK NO!!!!! 2. Infrastructure. When you get some time please go and speak to Mr. Jeff Edwards (a long-time resident and business owner) and ask him if the $1,000.00 he and other business owners (seperately paid), had been paying for, for the last 10 years contributed in the maintance of the parking lot behind his their businesses. 3. Economic Development. I do not know if you are aware that the city intends to rebuilt the old Porterville Hotel site to house the District Attorney of Tulare County. Don't forget we still have 6 court rooms vacant at our new $93 Million courthouse. In order to aquire the hotel the city had to paid down the remainer of a state grant in the amount of $740,000.00, plus a development grant of $450,000.00 and a $150,000.00 note owed to Citicorp. If you get the chance, check out the repairs the city claims it has repaired regrading the drive thru allies along side of Main Street. Mr. Station, I personally, don't feel that an individual has to serve in any committee, volunteer, or be a business owner in order to be a servant to the people. A Servant simply has to follow the principles of our constitutions, which allows the people to have their freedom, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It takes real men like you and I, to question the intents of local government and not just accept lip service. Sir: Can we have coffee, sometime? I guarantee you that at the end of our second cup, you'll regret you didn't vote for me. John"

— ***John Duran**, on **Political Fix (3 July 2014)***

Black Tie

Alex Oldenbourg



Dr. Jupiter Pluvius is being stingy with his water pistol.

Veteran's Corner

Vets Health and Resource Fair in Corcoran

Joe Wright

The VA Central California Health Care System, Office of Rural Health, in conjunction with American Legion Post #144, is sponsoring a Health and Resource Fair in Corcoran on August 22, at the Corcoran Veterans Memorial Building, 1000 Van Dorsten Ave. The event will run from 9am to noon. Veterans, spouses and family members are encouraged to attend. Refreshments will be provided.

Resources will be available to answer questions about many veteran benefits including VA Healthcare, homeless programs and education assistance. VA Healthcare enrollment physicals will be available on site. The Kings County Veterans Service Office will be there to answer questions about claims assistance.

Local service providers/organizations, educational institutions, community service groups and any other organization that encounters veterans and their families are encouraged to participate. The point of contact for service providers is Katrina Ballard at 225-6100 ext. 5275.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office issues Veteran ID cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Joe Wright if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com.

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call 852-2669; or e-mail joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us.

"How terribly sad that nothing has been done to mitigate the impacts of the operation on what was 128 acres of pasture that I irrigated for twenty years while it maintained a standing water level of two feet in the summer and three feet in the winter. I also dug postholes and know first hand. Even the V-ditch, if it were functioning, does not completely mitigate the impacts of the mining.

But sadder yet is the typical inaction of the RMA and the Board of Supervisors while households go without water. There are many solutions and monies set aside in the form of finacial assurances to temporarily alleviate the impacts until our local government can complete its lethargic hand wringing. There is absolutely no excuse to let this situation get so far out of hand."

— ***John Dofflemyer**, on **CEMEX Mine Drains Lemon Cove Wells***

"We have a different situation living north of Visalia all the wells are going dry because the farmers received 0 water so all the water they are using is from the ground. My neighbors well is dry, he is hooked up to our well, this is reduculous and unbelievable."

— ***Vicky Casey**, on **CEMEX Mine Drains Lemon Cove Wells***

Send us your Letters to the Editor

Editor's note: Now that the *Valley Voice* is receiving many more letters than previously, we'd like to state the obvious by saying that it is not our policy to edit your editorials. Bear this in mind, therefore, when writing us--so please be lucid.

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CEMEX

Continued from p. 1

included and that also makes the report invalid. Just assuming the wells are fed by water from the hillsides is conjecture. Find the aquifer for these wells and the Stillwell site using geological information which has not been developed."

Dr. David Cehrs, a director on the Kings River Conservation District, who has a master's degree in geology from California State University, Fresno, and a doctorate in hydrology from the University of Arizona, said that, "Dr. Andy Kopania is a hired hydrogeologic prostitute. He will say anything the person paying him wants, or not collect data that would incriminate his client." Dr. Cehrs advised the Lemon Cove residents to hire their own hydrologist, even if it is expensive.

CEMEX's Law Firm Attacks Locals

As stated on their website, "Mitchell Chadwick, LLP, is the premier natural resources boutique law firm in California, and the state's foremost legal advisor to energy, mining, land use and renewable resource companies. We work throughout California, typically operating in 20 to 30 counties in any given year."

This law firm was hired by CEMEX to defend their position.

Tom Cairns, the appointed spokesperson for the Lemon Cove residents, had written two concise letters in response to EMKO's hydrology report and outlined other problems with the Stillwell Mine. In a June 19th letter from Mitchell Chadwick law firm to the RMA, they wrote a five-page, single-spaced document picking Cairns apart, down to the size of the pumps he referenced to fill the recharge trench. Mitchell Chadwick also claims that Cairns' statement that, "well drillers in the county are unavailable for one year or more" is unproven. The law firm's letter also states that CEMEX's CUP does not require the unnecessary indexing of the water levels to the MSL.

The letter ends with, "CEMEX will continue to work with the Stillwell Project neighbors who are actually experiencing water level problem to provide some assistance as a good neighbor. CEMEX is in full compliance with the requirements of its CUP and has provided an expert hydrogeological report that proves Mr. Cairns' claims are factually inaccurate."

From the law firm's reaction to Cairns' letters, one could only conclude that he hit a nerve.

In a June 20th letter from Mitchell Chadwick to the RMA, the law firm again takes great pains to discredit Frank Callahan, a member of the Lemon Cove Neighbors group. Callahan, a well-respected, longtime Lemon Cove farmer, has a residential well that has been affected by another one of CEMEX' gravel mines only a mile away from Stillwell. In this lengthy letter, Mitchell Chadwick refutes Callahan's and his neighbor's claims that CEMEX' mining activities were negatively impacting their wells.

In very sloppy work, the law firm misspells the name of one of their experts and misstates their expert's place of work. Their expert's actual name is Paul Charpentier, who was indirectly quoted as saying that he, "confirmed that groundwater levels throughout the county have decreased by approximately one hundred feet or more due to the severe drought. In fact Mr. Chanterlier (sic) was surprised that the Lemon Cove Neighbors were not experiencing more severe water level problems due to the drought."

Charpentier, who does private well sampling, knows firsthand about wells going dry in Tulare County. It is true that the drought has dried up wells in Farmersville, Monson-Sultana and Seville, among other communities. But that's not a Lemon Cove problem. The water flows here, drought or not, and is flowing in the ditches right now, and fills Stillwell Lake, as you read this article.

Mitchell Chadwick concludes that the Lemon Cove Neighbors, who live next to the Lemon Cove Mine and Reclamation Project west of Highway 216, were only interested in a money grab. The law firm stated that the group wanted a similar offer proposed to the Stillwell Project neighbors. In that offer, CEMEX proposed to pay for half of a deeper communal well next to their Stilwell Project. Only paying for half of the well would have left four homeowners holding a $20,000 bill to actually get the water to their individual homes. The residents living next to the Stillwell Project politely declined CEMEX' generous offer, and the Lemon Cove Neighbor's would have also.

Tulare County Resource Management Agency Responds

Despite the fact that Mitchell Chadwick claims that it is beyond the scope of Tulare County to make CEMEX address Cairns' unfounded concerns, RMA has recognized Cairns as the spokesperson for the Lemon Cove residents. In a July 16th letter addressed to Cairns, Michael Spata, associate director of RMA, outlines the four steps Tulare County intends to take.

RMA's first priority was hiring Tully and Young, an engineering company, to do a peer review. An equal priority was given to delivering drinking water to those residents living next to the Stillwell Project. Using a grant received from the State Water Resources Control Board, RMA delivered a three-month supply of drinking water to the residents whose wells have gone dry.

The third step is completing the peer review and conducting a public hearing with the planning commission to determine whether the county should modify the Conditional Use Permit, revoke the permit or take no action. The fourth step is to continue to attempt to resolve the problem informally without having to conduct a public hearing.

After reading through CEMEX' letters, reports and offers, an informal resolution does not seem likely. The engineering company, Tully and Young, are hoping to finish their evaluation of EMKO environmental report and all other information within two weeks. They have their work cut out for them. In this paper's one-hour not-so-peer review process, we discovered that CEMEX' hydrology report cherry-picked the facts to absolve themselves of the residents' well woes. We also found a law firm obsessed with discrediting well-liked and well-respected members of our community and doing shoddy work to support their arguments.

That begs the question – how much more will Tully and Young discover, given their expertise and time?

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Valley Voice
Valley Scene

Sound N Vision Marks 10th Anniversary with Concerts, Fund Drive and New Collaboration

Steve Pastis

The Sound N Vision Foundation, which creates and promotes culturally diverse events in the Visalia area, marks its 10th anniversary this month.

During that time, Sound N Vision has provided the community with shows featuring national touring artists from around the world, and created events to put the spotlight on local performers. The many acts that SNV has brought to Visalia stages include: "Best New Artist" Grammy Award-winner Bon Iver, indie-rock giant Vampire Weekend, "Best Classical Crossover Album" Grammy Award-winner Jake Shimabukuro and arena-filling band Foster the People.

Through the years, Sound N Vision has partnered with other non-profits and local businesses to deliver a variety of festivals and events. SNV has also provided free music and art classes in the summer for local youth.

"For the past decade, I have spent countless days and nights with local strangers that later have become close friends," said Aaron Gomes, SNV executive director. "I've had the pleasure of hosting concerts by appreciative young bands that have in some cases gone on to become seasoned Grammy Award winners. And, I've watched some of our city's youth blossom into young adult musicians and artists right before my eyes.

Pixies frontman Frank Black rocks Cellar Door at Sound N Vision show. Photo by John Tipton.

"Back 10 years ago, I was writing music and touring with my own bands," Gomes recalled about the beginnings of Sound N Vision. "I met bands touring up and down the coast." When Gomes started having children, he didn't want to perform on stage, but he wanted to stay involved in the music business.

"You get older and you start realizing you want to make a difference on a bigger scale," he said, adding that as a teacher for 14 years he has long had a passion to help kids, in addition to his passion for music.

Gomes is grateful for the music lessons he had as a child. "Not all kids have this exposure," he said. "I wanted to give kids this opportunity. The idea was to get their feet wet by exposing them to music."

Meanwhile, SNV was putting on more and more concerts, which were getting larger. The indie bands started to get signed by major labels. "All of the sudden, the shows started to get really big, and the show guarantees (up-front money paid to bands) got to be hundreds of dollars."

Gomes credits then-Visalia City Manager Steve Salomon with seeing the value of Sound N Vision as an important part of the city's image as a "cultural oasis." Salomon helped SNV get 501(3)c status in two months. "We've just passed the five-year probationary period," Gomes noted.

The Sound N Vision Foundation is planning two concerts on Friday, August 15th to celebrate its ten years of booking events. The first party will be an intimate all-ages free concert at Velouria Records, 101 W. Main St., Visalia, with The Mattson 2 performing at 7pm. The party continues for those 21+ that night with a 9:30pm show at Cellar Door when the Mattson 2 play once again, this time after opening band Taco Wagon. Both events are free, but donations are welcomed.

"The Mattson 2 music has soundtracked some of my favorite modern surf films, and have a new

ANNIVERSARY continued on **23 »**

Jonathan Wheeler as Clyde Barrow and Rebecca Coffey as Bonnie Parker.

'Bonnie & Clyde' to Take Ice House Theater Stage in Musical Caper

Nancy Holley

Over the years, Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow have been immortalized in books and movies. Now their story of romance and escapades is live on the Ice House stage, supported by rockabilly, country and gospel music that will have your toes tapping.

"Bonnie & Clyde: A New Musical" goes beyond the excitement of their notorious crime spree, providing insights into the people. Who were Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow? What were their beliefs about family and the law?

Rebecca Coffey describes Bonnie as "a dreamer. She didn't start out a bad girl. She was a typical girl swept away in the thrill and excitement of what Clyde could offer her." Coffey says she is excited to be portraying Bonnie and loves the history of the play.

Jonathan Wheeler (Clyde Barrow) is new to the Ice House Theater, but is a

BONNIE & CLYDE continued on **18 »**

Can Tulare County Support Two Pop Culture Conventions?

Steve Pastis

Buzz Con, a two-day pop culture convention, will be held at the International AgriCenter in Tulare on September 13-14. This inaugural event comes less than six months after the Tulare Sci-Fi Con, which had its inaugural event at the same location on March 29.

Virgina Hey is scheduled to appear at Buzz Con.

"It's more of a video gaming and cosplay (costume) event," said Joe Chris, one of the three Buzz Con planners, noting that the show is about science fiction, comics, television, sports cards, movies, horror, toys such as Barbie dolls and Hot Wheels, and gaming.

"We love putting on these shows," said Chris, whose experience includes planning similar shows in Bakersfield, Ventura, Palmdale and Lancaster. "But after a while, it gets tiring travelling city to city." Chris lives just outside of Visalia. His partners live in Hanford and Bakersfield.

But can Tulare County support two similar pop culture events?

"This being a small town with many rural areas, it is unclear at this time whether Tulare can support two conventions of a similar type," said Derek Mazer, exhibits director for Tulare Sci-Fi Con. "We will be looking at it closely.

"If Buzz Con does well, then it's a good sign our community might be able to support two conventions in a single year," he said. "It would make having a

BUZZ CON continued on **22 »**

'Light Up the Fox' Benefit to Help Restore Historic Marquee

On Saturday, August 23, the Visalia Fox Theatre will host a "Light Up The Fox" benefit concert to launch a capital campaign to restore the theater marquee to its original look.

The Historic Visalia Fox Theatre recently announced plans to restore the marquee to the original design from 1930, an effort that will require financial investment by the community. The theater is looking for donations to offset the cost of the marquee and the 1,300 light bulbs needed to light it up. When someone donates to this cause, their name will be placed on one of the light bulbs, meaning their name will truly be up in lights at the Fox.

Leaving Austin

The August 23rd benefit concert will feature three Valley bands. Leaving Austin is part of the new generation of country music. This five-piece band offers a unique blend of great harmonies with rock, pop and country to make something all their own.

Since 2008, Motel Drive has become one of the Valley's premier live rock bands. They've described themselves as a "rootsy, and greasy country, rock and roll, and rockabilly band where Gretsch guitars wail, an upright bass slaps you around, and voodoo drums pound the night away."

Richfield has played up and down the state and plays a style of music that has been considered the "California Sound," a blend of Americana, folk and rock. Fans of the Eagles, the '60s Bakersfield sound and early Wilco, take note.

Tickets are $13. Doors open at 6pm. Music starts at 7pm. Call 625-1369 for tickets and information, or visit www.foxvisalia.org.

Shakespeare in the Plaza to Present 'As You Like It'

Staff Reports

The ninth annual "Shakespeare in the Plaza" presents the timeless comedy "As You Like It." Show dates are August 7, 10, 14 and 16 at dusk (about 8pm). The location is the stage at Sweet Brier Plaza in Downtown Lindsay. Admission is free, and refreshments will be available.

"As You Like It" is set in a duchy in France, but most of the action takes place in the nearby Forest of Arden. Duke Frederick (Val Saucedo) has usurped the Duchy and exiled his older brother, Duke Senior (Charles Hickinbotham), who flees to the Forest of Arden. The duke's daughter, Rosalind (Grace Loeffler), has been permitted to remain at court because she is the closest friend and cousin of Frederick's only child, Celia (Audrey Loeffler).

Oliver (Tom Crowe) woos Celia (Audrey Loeffler) and Orlando (Chris Shepard) woos Rosalind (Grace Loeffler)

Orlando (Chris Shepard), a young gentleman who has fallen in love with Rosalind, is forced to flee to the forest with his servant Adam (Jim Kliegl) after being persecuted by his older brother, Oliver (Tom Crowe). Later, Frederick becomes angry and banishes Rosalind from court. Celia and Rosalind decide to also flee to Arden, with Rosalind disguised as a young man, Ganymede, and Celia disguised as his poor sister, Aliena.

Rosalind and Celia arrive in the forest, where they buy a shepherd's house and hire a shepherd, Corin (Jack Burton) to attend their flock. Orlando, meanwhile is littering the forest with love poems to Rosalind. She encounters him as Ganymede and tells him she can cure him of his love-sickness if he will pretend that she is Rosalind and woo her as such. Ganymede will attempt to show him how unworthy Rosalind is of his love. He accepts the challenge and swears that "he" cannot destroy his love for Rosalind.

There are other lovers who also people the Forest of Arden. One is Silvius (Erick Soto) who is madly in love with Phoebe (Kelly Moua). She distains his love, and when she meets Ganymede, falls madly in love with "him." Another is Jacques (Jeremy Waterman), a servant of Duke Senior, who meets, woos and wins Audrey (Claire Buzzelli), a country shepherdess. Jacques must first run off William (Emmanuel Robles), who also loves Audrey. And lastly there is Oliver, who has a change of heart, and then loses his heart to Aliena.

Celebrant Singers Return for Homecoming Concert

After a busy summer of ministry and travel around the U.S., France and Guatemala, Celebrant Singers return to Visalia for their 37th Annual Grand Homecoming Concert at 7pm on Saturday, August 9, at L.J. Williams Theater, 1001 W. Main St., Visalia. Admission is free and a love offering will be taken.

Celebrant Singers will hold their 37th Annual WorldTouch Partner's Banquet at 7pm on Tuesday, August 12, at the Visalia Convention Center. The event features a dinner while hearing testimonies and inspiring music from the summer teams. The event, which is a major fundraiser for the ministry, also includes international guests and video reports.

In their 37-year history, Celebrants have ministered in all 50 states, across Canada, and in more than 97 nations. They have sung to more than six million people in live concerts and countless others via broadcast media.

Celebrants are ecumenical in nature. Teams are comprised of dedicated and talented young adults representing several states, Canadian provinces and several additional nations.

Celebrant Singers is an outreach of Stone Ministries, Inc., a non-profit Christian corporation ministering to the needs of people through music and the arts. For banquet tickets or more information, visit www.celebrants.org or call 740-4000.

Arts Visalia Showcases Young Artists

Kevin Bowman

As we wind down the month of July, and with it our summer art programs for youth, Arts Visalia shifts gears for the month of August, when we present the kids' artworks in our annual Young At Art exhibition.

Every summer, we offer a six-week series of art classes for children and youth ages five and up. Structured as mini-camps, each class meets daily for one week, with classes covering a wide variety of approaches to drawing, painting, ceramics and other art forms.

Art by Lindsey Mitchell.

This is our chance to celebrate the creative talent of these young artists, to give them a moment in the spotlight. With each student invited to display one artwork from each class they took, the gallery walls (and pedestals) are literally packed with artworks of all shapes, sizes and styles. Our approach always places emphasis on the process of creativity over the final product, though in the Young At Art show, we are always proud to show off the results of all the students' work. One need only see the pride on a child's face when they stand in front of their artworks on display in our gallery to know the benefits of making art in their lives.

Classes this summer were taught by some very talented and exceptionally dedicated art instructors, including longtime Arts Visalia instructors Jamie Boley and Joan Huckabay, College of the Sequoias instructors Jessica Robles and Francisco Alonso, Jorge Garza of Clay Studio/Artzone, and two new faces to the program in Sharon Turner and Laura Guzman.

Our goal is to provide our students with a safe, fun environment where they learn the basic theories and techniques behind art. Creating art engages young people in hands-on rewarding activities where the final product is a result of their own efforts, their own experimentation. This experience helps to develop hand-eye coordination, critical thinking as well as a sense of delayed gratification.

The youth education program at Arts Visalia grows a little each year with more and more young people participating in it. While the classes are tuition-based, financial assistance scholarships are available to help cover the tuition costs for children who otherwise may not be able to participate in the classes. Our goal is to ensure that every interested child in our community has the opportunity to take part in our art classes.

These scholarships are available thanks to the generous support of grants from the United Way of Tulare County, Southern California Edison, the Carolyn S. Kruse Foundation and the City of Visalia, in addition to private donations made to Arts Visalia's Art Scholarship Fund. If you know a child whom you believe would benefit from one of these scholarships, please contact Arts Visalia so that we may get them enrolled. Enrollment is taken on a first come, first served basis for all of our classes.

"Young at Art 2014" is on display at Arts Visalia through August 29th. Admission is free and open to the public.

Arts Visalia is located at 214 E. Oak Ave. in Downtown Visalia. For more information on any of our programs, call us at 739-0905 or visit us at artsvisalia.org.

Kevin Bowman is the director of Arts Visalia and an instructor of art at College of the Sequoias.

Bonnie & Clyde

Continued from p. 17

veteran actor with numerous credits in Fresno, Clovis and Reedley. "Clyde was a womanizer until he met Bonnie," he explains. "He would do anything for her; yet they were abusive to each other." Wheeler had other theatrical plans for the summer, but when he heard the music from "Bonnie & Clyde," he knew this was the show for him.

After experiences with the West Dallas Police, the law meant little. Family was everything to Bonnie, Clyde, Clyde's brother Buck (Louis Lyons) and Buck's wife, Blanche (Krystle McWells). Their close relationship is what got them all in trouble. McWells noted that in the end, "Blanche was the only one alive and went to prison for six years even though she never committed a crime."

Lyons is a newcomer to the Ice House stage, but not to Visalia. He came back to Visalia after law school. "My first experience has been great," he says. "There is a real sense of community among the cast and crew."

Marcus Cardinas portrays Ten Hinton, who was a deputy sheriff at the time Bonnie and Clyde were killed. Cardinas is also new to the Ice House, but has been involved in theater in Clovis.

In addition to the five major characters, the production features a supporting ensemble of 18. Director Corey Ralston is very proud of his versatile cast. "The show has an epic quality," he says. "The music is incredible. 'Bonnie & Clyde' is a love story for the ages, a fascinating historical tale."

After the August 17th matinee, "Back Stage at the Ice House" will be hosted by Sharon DeCoux, a veteran Visalia Player. Audience members will have an opportunity for a behind-the-scenes look at the show and the opportunity to ask questions and interact with the cast and crew.

"Bonnie & Clyde" runs for three weekends at the Ice House Theater at Race and Santa Fe in Visalia. Evening performances are at 7:30pm on August 8, 9, 15, 16, 22 and 23, and matinees are at 2pm on August 10, 17 and 24. To purchase tickets, visit www.visaliaplayers.org or the "Visalia Community Players" Facebook page, or call 734-3900.

Juni Fisher to Perform at Mavericks

Mavericks Coffee House will welcome western singing artist Juni Fisher for a 7pm concert on Friday, August 22.

Fisher, who was born and raised in Strathmore, started out as a horse rider and trainer, but soon turned her talents to writing and singing songs about the cowboy and cowgirl way of life.

In the last few years, the Western Music Association named her solo musician of the year, female performer of the year and entertainer of the year. Last year, she was nominated for five more awards, winning for WMA Song of the Year. This year, she won the WWA Spur Award for Song of the Year.

For tickets ($25) or more information, call Mavericks at 624-1400, or stop by at 238 E. Caldwell Avenue, Visalia.

Sequoia Natural History Association Hosts Programs at Wuksachi Lodge

The Sequoia Natural History Association is hosting a busy schedule of activities this month at Wuksachi Lodge in Sequoia National Park. Upcoming events include:

Wildlife Wednesdays – 10am on August 13, 20 & 27: Join a Sequoia naturalist for a 45-minute wildlife-spotting clinic.

Wonders of the Night Sky – 9pm on August 8, 13, 15, 20, 22, 27 & 29: Explore the beauty and wonder of the park's protected sky. Bring warm layers and a flashlight.

Voices of the Past – 6pm daily: Travel back in time with a Sequoia naturalist to see the park through a living history character.

Family Campfire – 7:30pm on August 9, 16, 23 & 30: Hear stories of behind the scenes of our National Park. Dress warmly. S'more fixings encouraged.

Flashlight Hike – 9pm on August 7, 14, 21 & 28: Meet a naturalist to explore the nocturnal world of Sequoia Park. Bring warm layers and a flashlight.

Owl Prowl – 7:30pm on August 9 & 23: Listen for owls while learning about their natural history at an idyllic meadow setting.

Family Birding Walk – 9am on August 16: Learn to identify common birds of the Sierra Nevada.

Full Moon on Moro Rock – 7:30pm on August 8: Listen to cultural and science stories about Earth's natural satellite. Bring warm layers and a flashlight.

For more information, visit www.sequoiahistory.org.

Local 7-Year Old Author Creates Magical Comic Book World

A young girl gets transported to a world filled with magic and conflict after receiving a mystical tome. How will she ever get home?

This is the world created by 7-year-old Tulare County author Symana Symanski, who currently has a Kickstarter campaign to raise enough funding to publish *Chess Volume 2*, the follow-up to her earlier work.

Her mother, Natalie, did the storyboarding and original character designs with Symana (and put together the Kickstarter campaign). Jessica Boston Fuller did the final artwork.

Chess Volume 2 will be a full-color, 28-page comic. This story has been in the making since the creative genius and author was 6 and began dictating her story to her mother nightly.

The story revolves around a young girl named Elise who gets transported into the magical world of Newland. Completely out of her depths in a world surrounded with action and adventure, she has to figure out how to return home in one piece, if she can. She quickly has to choose sides with strangers she has barely met in order to find her way back.

Unfortunately, nothing is as easy as it seems and she has to help them before they can help her.

Symana Symanski

"My family mustered together as much funds as we could to bring the first chapter of the 20 she has written down to life in a comic," said Natalie. "We took her to Anime Expo for its release, and the joy of watching her share her story with absolute strangers filled my heart with a joy I didn't know could exist. I had asked her what she loved about telling stories and she told me that it was her chance to help make people happy."

For more information, visit www.kickstarter.com/projects/2117031415/chess-volume-2.

NEXT DEADLINE: 14 AUGUST 2014

Budweiser

MUSIC

Through-Aug. 29 – Rockin' the Arbor – 6-10pm
On Friday nights, Tachi Palace Hotel & Casino will present Rockin' the Arbor, featuring live music, food vendors and family activities at 300 E Street. Featured bands include: Midnight Wine August 8; Force 'Em Aug. 15; Rockville Aug. 22; and The Fabulous Enchantments Aug. 29. For information, call 924-6401.

Aug. 7, 14, 21, 28 – 3's A Crowd – 7-10pm
On Thursdays, 3's A Crowd performs at Crawdaddys Visalia, 333 E. Main St. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Aug. 8 – Springville Concerts in the Park – 7-9pm
Greasy Kid Stuff will perform. Bring lawn chairs, blankets and refreshments. For information, visit thecenterofspringville.com.

Aug. 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 25, 29, 30 – The Crawdads – 7-10pm
Every Friday and Saturday, Keith and the Crawdads perform at Crawdaddys Visalia, 333 E. Main St. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Aug. 8 – 38 Special – 8pm
Eagle Mountain Casino continues its 2014 concert series with the Southern Rock group 38 Special. Tickets are $35 general admission, $40 reserved. Tickets and information are available at eaglemtncasino.com. The casino is located at 681 South Tule Road, Porterville.

Aug. 8 – Geoff Thurman – 8-10pm
Geoff Thurman will perform at Farmer's Fury, 358 West D, Lemoore. For information, visit farmersfurywines.com.

Aug. 8 – Foxygen and Dub Thompson – 9:30pm
Sound N Vision Foundation will present Foxygen and Dub Thompson at The Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St., Visalia. Tickets for this 21+ concert are $10. For information, visit snvfoundation.org. Tickets available at Ticketweb.com.

Aug. 8, 9, 15, 16, 22, 25, 29, 30 – The 2nd Floor Night Club – 10pm-2am
Every Friday and Saturday, the second floor of Crawdaddys Visalia offers deejays and dancing. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Aug. 9 – Visalia Concerts in the Park – 6-8pm
Five Live will perform at Lions Park as part of Visalia's Concert in the Park Series. On the second Saturday of every month through November, Visalia Parks & Recreation present Concerts in the Park. The events are free. For information, call 713-4365.

Aug. 9 – Celebrant Singers Homecoming Concert – 7pm
After a summer of ministry and travel around the U.S., France and Guatemala, Celebrant Singers will host its 37th Annual Grand Homecoming Concert at the L.J. Williams Theater, 1001 W. Main St., Visalia. For information, visit celebrants.org.

Aug. 9 – IslaView – 8-10pm
IslaView will perform at Farmer's Fury, 358 West D, Lemoore. For information, visit farmersfurywines.com.

Aug. 10 – Conjunto Primavera – 7pm
Eagle Mountain Casino will present Latin music legends Conjunto Primavera. Tickets, $30, available at Guadalajara Market of Porterville, 784-0511; Don Robertos in Visalia Mall 741-9572; and Jalisco Jewelers in Bakersfield (661) 322-5826.

Aug. 10, 17, 24, 31 – Sunday Jam – 7-10pm
On Sunday nights, a jam session with the Crawdad's is featured at Crawdaddys Visalia, 333 E. Main St. Special guests and local talent have been known to sit in. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Aug. 12 – Celebrant Singers 37th Annual Banquet – 7pm
Three Celebrant teams, international guests, music and video reports will be featured at the Celebrant Singers 37th Annual World-Touch Partner's Banquet. The event, held at the Visalia Convention Center, is a major fundraiser for the ministry. For reservations, call 740-4000.

Aug. 12, 19, 26 – The Crawdads with Cody Torres – 7-10pm
On Tuesdays, Cody Torres performs with the Crawdads at Crawdaddys Visalia, 333 E. Main St. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Aug. 12 – Woods – 9:30pm
Sound N Vision Foundation will present Woods at The Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St., Visalia. Tickets for this 21+ concert are $5. For tickets and information, visit snvfoundation.org.

Aug. 13, 20, 27 – KJUG Country Music night – 7-10pm
Every Wednesday, David Laswell and the Rounders perform at KJUG Country Music Night at Crawdaddys Visalia, 333 E. Main St. For information, visit CrawdaddysVisalia.com.

Aug. 15 – Zzah – 8-10pm
Zzah will perform at Farmer's Fury, 358 West D, Lemoore. For information, visit farmersfurywines.com.

Aug. 15 – Sound N Vision Foundation's 10 Year Anniversary Party – 9pm
Sound N Vision Foundation will present a free party featuring The Mattson 2 and Taco Wagon at The Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St., Visalia. Must be 21. For information, visit snvfoundation.org.

Aug. 16 – Merlinda Espinosa – 8-10pm
Merlinda Espinosa will perform at Farmer's Fury, 358 West D, Lemoore. For information, visit farmersfurywines.com.

Aug. 17 – Helio Sequence & Liam Finn – 6:30pm
Sound N Vision Foundation will present Helio Sequence and Liam Finn at The Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St., Visalia. The concert is open to all ages. Tickets are $10. For tickets and information, visit snvfoundation.org.

Aug. 17 – Helio Sequence & Liam Finn – 9:30pm
Sound N Vision Foundation will present Helio Sequence and Liam Finn at The Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St., Visalia. The concert is 21+. Tickets are $10. For tickets and information, visit snvfoundation.org.

Aug. 21 – Built to Spill – 9pm
Sound N Vision Foundation will present Built To Spill and Slam Dunk and Warm Hair at The Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St., Visalia. Tickets for this 21+ concert are $20. For tickets and information, visit snvfoundation.org.

Aug. 22 – Tipperary Stew – 6:30-8:30pm
Tipperary Stew performs Irish and Americana music and dance every fourth Friday at 210 Cafe, 210 W. Center, Visalia. For information, call 739-9010.

Aug. 22 – Juni Fisher – 7pm
Juni Fisher will perform at Mavericks Coffee House, 238 E. Caldwell Ave., Visalia. Tickets are $25. Seating is limited. For information, visit mavericks coffeehouse.com.

Aug. 22 – Doc's Holiday– 8-10pm
Doc's Holiday will perform at Farmer's Fury, 358 West D, Lemoore. For information, visit farmersfurywines.com.

Aug. 22 – Springville Concerts in the Park – 7-9pm
Randy Deaver will perform. Bring lawn chairs, blankets and refreshments. For information, visit thecenterofspringville.com.

Aug. 22 – Man Man– 9:30pm
Sound N Vision Foundation will present Man Man and Landlady at The Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St., Visalia. Tickets for this 21+ concert are $13. For tickets and information, visit snvfoundation.org.

Aug. 23 – Ronnie Nix– 8-10pm
Ronnie Nix will perform at Farmer's Fury, 358 West D, Lemoore. For information, visit farmersfurywines.com.

Aug. 28 – Engelbert Humperdinck – 7:30pm
Engelbert Humperdinck will perform at Tachi Palace. Tickets, $30-$70, available at tachipalace.com.

Aug. 29 – Peter Frampton – 7pm
Grammy-winning guitarist and songwriter Peter Frampton will be performing at Oval Park, 808 N. Court Street, Visalia as part of his world tour. Cost is $60. Tickets available at ticketfly.com/event/475193.

Aug. 29 – IslaView– 8-10pm
IslaView will perform at Farmer's Fury, 358 West D, Lemoore. For information, visit farmersfurywines.com.

Aug. 30 – Cosmonauts & L.A. Witch – 8pm
Sound N Vision Foundation will present Cosmonauts & L.A. Witch at The Cellar Door, 101 W. Main St., Visalia. Must be 21. Tickets $7. For information, visit snvfoundation.org.

EVENTS

Through-Aug. 20 – Farmers Market at Quail Park – 10:30am-1:30pm
Quail Park Retirement Village will host a Farmers Market at 4520 W. Cypress Ave., Visalia. For information, call 624-3500.

Through-Aug. 29 – Rockin' the Arbor – 6-10pm
On Friday nights, Lemoore Chamber of Commerce will present Rockin' the Arbor, featuring live music, food vendors and family activities at 300 E Street. For information, call 924-6401.

Aug. 7 – Hanford Thursday Night Market Place – 5:30-9pm
Fresh produce, beer garden, live band, D.J., local vendors, kids activities and theme nights are featured every Thursday night through September in downtown Hanford. AJM Band will be the featured entertainment. For information, visit mainstreethanford.com.

Aug. 7 – Tachi Palace Fights 20 – 6pm
Tachi Palace Fights 20 will be held at Tachi Palace. Bingo Hall Doors open at 5pm. Tickets, $35-$125, are available at tachipalace.com.

Aug. 8 – 26th Annual Tommy Elliott Memorial Golf Classic – 10am
Kaweah Delta Hospital Foundation will host this tournament and silent auction, luncheon and reception to benefit the Labor and Delivery Unit at the Kaweah Delta Medical Center. Fees start at $175. Sponsorships are available. For information, call 624-2359.

Aug. 8, 9 & 23 – Micro Sprints – 5pm
The best Micro Sprint drivers in the nation will face off at Lemoore Raceway, 1750 Hwy 41. For information, visit lemooreraceway.com.

Aug. 9 – Donuts and Discussion – 8-9:30am
Visalia Vice Mayor Warren Gubler, Code Enforcement Manager Tracy Robertshaw and Police Lieutenant Brian Winter will host Donuts and Discussion at Lincoln Oval Park Community Center, 808 N. Court St. This informal gathering allows citizens time to talk with city representatives.

Aug. 9, 16, 23, 30 – Visalia Farmers Market – 8-11:30pm
Open year around, the market, corner of S. Mooney and W. Caldwell, offers fresh local produce, cooking demonstrations and entertainment every Saturday. For information, visit visaliafarmersmarket.com.

Aug. 9-10, 15-17, 23-24, 30-31 – Exeter Museum and Courthouse Gallery – 10-4pm
Exeter Museum and Courthouse Gallery is open Saturdays and Sundays for tours at 125 South B Street. For information, visit exeterhistoricalmuseum.com.

Aug. 10 – United Health Care 5K Run – 7am
United Health Care Centers, along with other local sponsors, is organizing a 5K run, 2-mile walk and one-mile walk/run for children un-

VENT CALENDAR

der 10 in celebration of the City of Corcoran Centennial. Cost to participate in the 5K run will be $20 for pre-registered adults and $10 for children under 10. Price includes a t-shirt and goodie bag. For information, email dhansen@jgboswell.com.

Aug. 11 – Corcoran Centennial Commemoration Ceremony
In celebration of the City of Corcoran Centennial, several activities are planned for the weekend of Aug. 10-11 including a 5K Run, a summer funfest, and fireworks display. The events will be capped with the official commemoration ceremony, in which a city time capsule will be opened and then re-sealed with new items and reburied.

Aug. 12 – Yosemite Perseid Meteor Shower
Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite will offer a once-in-a-lifetime viewing of the Perseid Meteor Shower from the vista of Glacier Point in Yosemite National Park. For $99 each, guests will get transportation to and from the park, interaction with expert astronomy guides, snacks and drinks for the show, and a keepsake tote bag with night sky goodies. For information, visit tenayalodge.com/651.htm.

Aug. 12 – Why Won't You Behave – 9-11pm
Brandman University Business Workshop Series will host Speaker Ruth Medlin at the Visalia Campus at Brandman University. Admission is free but reservations are required. Reservations may be made by calling 636-5585.

Aug. 14 – Thursday Night Market Place – 5:30-9pm
"Happy 123rd Birthday, Hanford" will be the theme of Hanford's Thursday Night Market Place in downtown Hanford. JJ Brown Band will be the featured entertainment. For information, visit mainstreethanford.com.

Aug. 15 – Tulare County Fair Entry Deadline
The Tulare County Fair has extended the deadline for indoor entries including fine art, photography, preserved and baked goods, bonsai and more. The application form is available online at tcfair.org.

Aug. 15 – 6th Annual Golf Skills Challenge – 7:30am-3pm
A 9-Hole Scramble and Skills Challenge Course will be held to raise funds for the Visalia Rescue Mission at the Valley Oaks Golf Course, Visalia. Fees are $600 per team. For information, visit vrmhope.org.

Aug. 15 – Travel Slide Show Presentation – 12-1pm
Visalia Chamber of Commerce will host "Romantic Village of Europe" a travel slide show presentation at the chamber office.

Aug. 16 – National Model Aviation Day – 9am
Tulare Condors R/C Club and Exeter Thunderhawks R/C Club will celebrate national model aviation day with demonstrations of airplanes, gliders, helicopters, cars and trucks and more at the International Agri-Center in Tulare. Parking and admission is free. Any donations are welcome and will go toward the Wounded Warrior Project. Food and drinks and product vendors will be available.

Aug. 19 – Your Professional Image – 9-11pm
Brandman University Business Workshop Series will host Tiffany Nielsen speaking on developing your professional image. The free event will be held at the Visalia Campus. RSVP at 636-5585.

Aug. 20 – Ribbon-Cutting for McDonalds and Associates – 3:30-4pm
The Visalia Chamber of Commerce will host a ribbon-cutting to welcome McDonald & Associates at the chamber offices at 220 E. Santa Fe.

Aug. 21 – Visalia Business Academy – 9-10am
On the third Thursday of each month, the Visalia Business Academy offers training workshops on topics chosen by members. The latest changes to the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) and how they affect businesses will be presented by David Little, CASp Access Consultant. The academy meets at Brandman University, 649 S. County Center Dr. All Visalia Chamber of Commerce members receive one free seat for all seminars. For information, call Nicola Wissler 734-5876.

Aug. 21 – Hanford Thursday Night Market Place – 5:30-9pm
Fresh produce, beer garden, live band, D.J., local vendors, kids activities and theme nights are featured every Thursday night through Sept. in downtown Hanford. Randy Deaver and Crossfire will be the featured entertainment. For information, visit mainstreethanford.com.

Aug. 23 – Central Valley Throwdown & Expo - 8am-9pm
The first Annual Central Valley Throwdown and Expo will be held at the Visalia Convention Center. For information, visit facebook.com/centralvalleythrowdown.

Aug. 23 – 6th Annual Brewfest – 5-9pm
The Lemoore Lions Club will hold its 6th Annual Brewfest at Lemoore Lions Club Park, corner of Fox Street and Fallenleaf Drive. Tickets are $35, which includes entertainment, unlimited her and sausage sampling. Additional food and wine sampling and soda and water will also be included. Designated-driver tickets are available for $20 each and includes everything except alcohol tasting. For tickets and information call 707-0435 or 707-7499.

Aug. 23 – Light Up the Fox – 6pm
Visalia Fox will launch its fundraising campaign to restore the marquee with a concert featuring three of the top Valley bands. Leaving Austin, Motel Drive and Richfield will perform. Doors open at 6pm and music starts at 7. Tickets are $13. For tickets, call 625-1369. For information, visit foxvisalia.org.

Aug. 23 – 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act
Sequoia and Kings Canyon will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, featuring book signing, exhibits, guest seminars, living history and ranger programs. For information, visit visitsequoia.com.

Aug. 26 – Business After Hours – 5:30-7:30pm
The Visalia Chamber Business After Hours program will be held at Suncrest Bank, 400 W. Center Ave. For information, visit visaliachamber.org.

Aug. 28 – Hanford Thursday Night Market Place – 5:30-9pm
Fresh produce, beer garden, live band, D.J., local vendors, kids activities and theme nights are featured every Thursday night through Sept. in downtown Hanford. Monsanto will be the featured entertainment. For information, visit mainstreethanford.com.

Aug. 28 – Getting to Know…Tim Ward - 6-7:45pm
The Visalia Branch Library with host District Attorney Tim Ward as part of its Getting to Know series. The program is free. For information, call 713-2707.

Aug. 29 - 559 Fights 28 Live MMA Cage Fights – 7pm
559 Fights #28 returns to Visalia Recreation Ballpark. VIP Tables/Seating available by calling 813-0307. Tickets $20 general admission, $40 cage side, $60 Front Row. Tickets available at Tickefly.com.

Aug. 30-31 – Santa Rosa Rancheria Pow Wow – 10am
The 14th Annual SRR Pow Wow will be held at Tachi Palace in Lemoore. Admission is free. Lawn chairs and coolers are allowed but will be inspected at entrance. Glass bottles and alcohol are prohibited.

Aug. 30 – Lucha Xtreme – 7pm
Lucha Xtreme Wrestling Entertainment will be at the Civic Center Auditorium in Hanford. A LIVE TV taping of the hit TV show "Lucha Xtreme" will be held. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., and bell time is 7pm. Tickets start at $10, and VIP Fan Access tickets are priced at $25. Those ticket holders can enter the venue a half hour early for a meet-and-greet with some of the top LuchaStars and to pick out their seats. For info, visit luchaxtreme.com.

THEATER

Aug. 7, 10, 14, 16 – Shakespeare in the Plaza – Dusk (about 8pm)
The 9th Annual Shakespeare in the Plaza presents the timeless comedy "As You Like It" at the Sweet Brier Plaza in Lindsay. Admission is free and refreshments will be available. For information, visit lindsaycommunitytheater.com/Shakespeare.html.

Aug. 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23 & 24 – 'Bonnie & Clyde: A New Musical'
"Bonnie & Clyde" runs for three weekends at the Ice House Theater at Race and Santa Fe in Visalia. Evening performances are at 7:30pm on August 8, 9, 15, 16, 22 and 23, and matinees are at 2pm on August 10, 17 and 24. To purchase tickets, visit www.visaliaplayers.org or the "Visalia Community Players" Facebook page, or call 734-3900.

Aug. 26 – Independent Film Series – 6-7:45pm
Visalia Branch Library's Independent Film Movement selection is "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?" In this madcap and light-hearted comedic romp, introverted optometrist Weichung begins to question his marriage with his wife Feng, upon learning of her desire to have another baby. (Mandarin with English subtitles.)

Aug. 30 – Anime Visalia – 10am-4:30pm
The monthly meeting of Anime Visalia will be held at the Visalia Branch Library, 200 W. Oak Street.

ART

Through Aug. 29 – "Beauty Runs in the Family" – 10am-3pm
The Creative Center's Jon Ginsburg Gallery is hosting a mother and daughter show featuring works by Milli and Lesli Pepper. For a tour of the gallery, call 733-9329, or visit the Creative Center office at 606 N. Bridge, Visalia.

Through Aug. 29 – Young at Art Exhibit – 12-5:30pm
Arts Visalia will exhibit the works of art by children and youth of its Summer Art Programs. Admission is free. The art will be on exhibit Aug. 29 every Wednesday through Saturday. For information, visit artsvisalia.org.

Through Aug. 31 – Betty Berk Artist Reception
Artist Betty Berk is now showing a retrospective of her still life paintings at Michael's Custom Jewelry, 316 W Main St., Visalia. An Artist Reception will be held during First Friday, the multi-sensory entertainment crawl in downtown Visalia. For information, visit bettyberk.com.

Aug. 9 – Evening of the Arts 2011 – 6-8pm
At the end of the summer, Kings Art Center celebrates the works created in its Summer Art Program with the annual Evening of the Art Event. Youth performers, ice cream and other treats will be featured. The youth art will be on exhibit in the Kings Art Center Banister Studio from Aug. 10-23.

Aug. 10 Through Sept. 23 – Dal Henderson Exhibit
A collection of works by artist Dal Henderson will be hosted by the Kings Art Center. The exhibit will be held Aug. 10-Sept. 23. For information, visit kingsartcenter.org.

Aug. 13, 27 – Crafty Corner: Knit and Crochet Group – 10:30am-12pm
Learn and practice fiber arts and meet-up with other like-minded people. The group meets the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month at Visalia Branch Library. For information, call 713-2703.

Aug. 14 – Valley Oak Quilt Guild – 10am
The Valley Oak Guild will meet at Tulare Community Church, 1820 N. Gem in Tulare. Lura Schwartz Smith will present a trunk show. For information, visit valleyoakqg.org.

Aug. 15 – Traditionals Transformed – 10am
The Valley Oak Guild will hold a workshop at Tulare Community Church, 1820 N. Gem in Tulare. Lura Schwartz Smith will be the instructor. For information, visit valleyoakqg.org.

Aug. 15-17 – Open Air Peddler's Market
The market featuring antiques and collectibles is held at Tumbleweeds Antiques, 159 North B Street, Exeter, and at Exeter Treasures, 558 E. Palm. To reserve space or for information, call 592-1940 or 936-1487.

Aug. 20 –The Knitting Club–5:30pm
This club meets every-other Wednesday in the Olympic Room of the Tulare Public Library. For information, visit tularepubliclibrary.org.

Sept. 3 – That Extra Dimension 2014 Reception – 6-8pm
An Invitational Sculpture and Functional Art Exhibition will be featured at Arts Visalia Sept. 3-26. A opening reception will celebrate the work of artists of the Central California region who are known for their 3D or sculptural creations. The event, at 214 E. Oak Ave., is free. For information, visit artsvisalia.org.

Sept. 19-21 – Open Air Peddler's Marketis
For information, call 592-1940 or 936-1487.

See more events online
ourvalleyvoice.com

Tower of Power to Play Tulare County Fair

The final day of the Tulare County Fair, Sunday, September 14, will feature the signature horn-driven "urban soul music" of Tower of Power on the Budweiser Stage. The band has been touring, recording and performing since 1968, and is currently touring with Journey.

Fair week kicks off with Metalachi, offering heavy metal and comedy on the Budweiser Stage on opening day, Wednesday, September 10; followed by rhythm and blues/funk ensemble Morris Day and The Time on Thursday, September 11; classic rocker Eddie Money on Friday, September 12; and up-and-coming country star JT Hodges on Saturday, September 13. All concerts begin at 8pm, and are free with paid admission.

The Tulare County Fair, September 10-14, offers a week of entertainment for the family, educational activities for children, all-new fair food, fun rides and more. Admission is $8 for adults; $5 for children 6-12. Seniors 62 and older are admitted for $5 on Senior Day, Friday, September 12. The entry form for judged creative exhibits – including fine art, photography, preserved and baked goods, and bonsai – is available online. Entries are due by August 15. A processing fee of $5 per exhibitor will be charged for online entries; the fee for hand-delivered entries is $10. For more information, visit www.tcfair.org.

'Spaghetti Event' to Feature Music and Meatballs

The non-profit Mighty Oak Chorus will present its annual "All You Can Eat Spaghetti Event" on Saturday, August 9, from 2-7pm at the Moose Lodge, 3360 S. Fairway St., Visalia. Chorus members, who come from cities throughout Kings and Tulare Counties, do all the cooking, serving and singing.

The Mighty Oak Chorus performs at last year's event.

The live entertainment features Broadway show tunes, Vaudeville standards and the greatest hits of the '40s, '50s and '60s.

Tickets are $10, $5 for 12 and younger, and are available in advance or at the door. For tickets or more information, call Dee Baughman at 625-1468 or 280-5715.

Buzz Con

Continued from p. 17

Tulare Sci-Fi Con in 2015 a bit easier of a decision. If Buzz Con doesn't do well, the Tulare Sci-Fi Con board would have to seriously look at whether we can hold a successful convention in 2015. Tulare Sci-Fi Con, being a non-profit, looks for donations to pay all convention expenses or startup costs. So with that comes a disadvantage in competing with for-profit ventures."

After Tulare Sci-Fi Con, Mazer was contacted by Chris and asked questions ranging from how the event went to how he felt about Chris doing another convention.

"I did express concern whether Tulare can support two," said Mazer. "I asked if instead of a separate convention, he could just bring his XBox video gaming tournament and celebrities to Tulare Sci-Fi Con in 2015 and work together. But because Buzz Con is a for-profit venture and Tulare Sci-Fi Con is non-profit, we couldn't come to an agreement. As our discussions progressed, I made an offer that if Buzz Con doesn't do well to try and salvage and work together next year by merging the two efforts to at least have one successful convention in our community."

"Basically, he's looking to see how we do," Chris said, adding that he hopes the two events can help build each other up by promoting the other event at their shows. "To me, it's all about working together, not about backstabbing."

There are differences between the shows. Mazer noted that Tulare Sci-Fi Con is non-profit with all of its proceeds in 2014 going to the Tulare Library Children's Section. BuzzCon is a for-profit venture, with intentions to donate a portion of its proceeds to a charity. Tulare Sci-Fi Con was a one-day pop culture convention, which included participants from a cross-section of genres, such as sci-fi, Renaissance, horror, fantasy, anime and others, with a costume contest. It included writers, directors, producers, celebrities, artists, collectable toys, comics, demonstrations and a Heroclix (board/figures) tournament.

"Buzz Con was first explained to me as a two-day video gaming tournament convention," said Mazer. "However, since my first conversation with the organizer, it has morphed into a little more like the Tulare Sci-Fi Con with vendors, cosplayers, an Xbox video gaming tournament and so far approximately 15+ celebrities, mainly from the sci-fi and video gaming genre."

Scheduled celebrities at Buzz Con include Virginia Hey, Vernon Wells, Jennifer Hale, Kimberley Brooks and Ali Hillis. And "so far, it's been going smoothly," according to Chris. "The Ag Center has been very helpful."

Chris doesn't see a problem in attendance as a result of the Tulare County Fair being held the same weekend. "We never thought about the fair," he admits, "but I think we'll be fine because we're going to pull our crowd."

For more information, visit www.tularebuzzcon.com.

COMMUNITY

Through Summer – Porterville City Pool – 12:15-4:15pm
The City Pool, 97 N. Park Dr., will be open Monday through Thursday through the summer. Admission: $1 children, $2 adult. Monthly pool passes, $30/adults and $20/children, are available at the pool cashier. For information, call 782-7543.

Through Oct. 11 – Kiwanis Maserati Raffle
The Kiwanis Club of Exeter Foundation is raffling a 1986 Chrysler RC Convertible by Maserati to raise funds for the Schroth Park playground. Drawing will be held at the Exeter Fall Festival Oct. 11. Tickets, $35 each or 3 for $100, are available at ABC Bookkeeping and Tax Services, Nielsen & Associates Insurance Agency and the Exeter Chamber of Commerce.

Aug. 7 – Cancer is Dinner Talk – 5:30pm
Kaweah Delta Health Care District hosts this support group at Sequoia Regional Cancer Center, 4945 W. Cypress Ave. For information, visit Kaweahdelta.org.

Aug. 7, 14, 21, 28 – eBook One-on-One - 5:30–6:30pm
Tulare Public Library will offer a computer class Thursdays on using Overdrive, one of the library's software databases, to select and download eBooks. For information, visit tularepubliclibrary.org.

Aug. 7 – Visalia Philatelic Society Auction – 6:15pm
Visalia Philatelic Society will meet at the Fellowship Hall of Grace Lutheran Church, 1111 S. Conyer St. For information, call 686-5067 or 734-6353.

Aug. 7 – Prepared Childbirth Classes – 7pm
The Kaweah Delta Health Care District offers childbirth classes at Kaweah Delta Multiservice Center, 402 W. Acequia. For information, visit Kaweahdelta.org.

Aug. 8 - Introduction to the PC – 8:30–9:30am
Tulare Public Library will offer a computer class in the Computer Lab. Register at the Research and Information desk or call 685-4503.

Aug. 8 – Prostate Cancer Support Group – 3:30pm
Kaweah Delta Health Care District hosts a free support group at Sequoia Regional Cancer Center, 4945 W. Cypress Ave.

Aug. 8 – Graphic Novel Club – 4-5pm
The Graphic Novel Club will meet at the Tulare Public Library in the Olympic Room. The group meets on the second Friday of each month. For information, call 685-4500.

Aug. 9 – Tulare Public Library Volunteer Training – 8:30-10am
Train to be a library volunteer. To sign up visit the Research and Information desk at the library, 475 N M St, Tulare.

Aug. 9 – Database Class – 8:30am – 9:30am
Tulare Public Library will offer access to Learning Express database, which provides hundreds of practice tests for jobs and immediate feedback. For details, visit tularepubliclibrary.org.

Aug. 9 – Second Saturday Book Club – 11am – 12pm
Tulare Public Library Second Saturday Book Club will discuss "The Aviator's Wife" in the Charter Room. For information, visit tularepubliclibrary.org.

Aug 10 – Second Sunday Seminars – 2-3pm
The Sarah Mooney Museum features seminars on the second Sunday every month. The programs focus on specific elements of turn-of-the-century life in the Lemoore/Kings County area. Lynda Lahodny will discuss "The Parlour." The museum, located at 542 W. D Street in Lemoore, is open every Sunday afternoon from 12-3pm for docent-led tours and special activities. For information, visit sarahamooneymuseum.com.

Aug. 10 – 50+ Rocks Hiking Club – 8-6pm
The 50+ Rocks Hiking club will travel to Twin Lakes Trail. The program offers those ages 50 and older guided hikes and a seat on the Sequoia Shuttle. Bring a sack lunch, water and daypack. Cost is $25. Pre-registration required. For information, visit liveandplayvisalia.com.

Aug. 11 – Loss of Spouse Grief Support – 10:30am
Kaweah Delta Health Care District offers a support group at Quail Park. For information, visit Kaweahdelta.org.

Aug. 11-Sept. 24 – Couch to 5K – 5:30-7pm
Learn about what it takes to become a runner and compete in a 5K run in a matter of weeks. Experienced runner Traci Dykstra will provide a guided training schedule. Class meets for seven weeks at St. John's Trail (Ben Maddox Entrance) in Visalia. Those under 16 must be accompanied by an adult. Cost is $40. Register at liveandplayvisalia.com.

Aug. 12, Sept 9 & Oct. 14 – Valley Oak SPCA Yappy Hour – 5-9pm
The Planning Mill Pizzeria will donate a portion of Yappy Hour proceeds to Valley Oak SPCA on the Second Tuesday of each month. Well-behaved, leashed pets are welcome on the patio at The Planning Mill, 514 E. Main St., Suite A, Visalia. For information, visit vospca.org.

Aug. 13, 20 & 27 – Intermediate Word Computer Class – 10am-11:45pm
Tulare Public Library, Visalia Branch will offer a 3-week computer class on Microsoft Word on Wednesdays. To sign up for any computer classes call 713-2713 or stop by the research and information desk.

Aug. 14 – Consulado Sobre Ruedas – 10am-12pm
Mexican citizens can get Consular cards or Mexican passports at the Tulare Public Library. Make an appointment online at SRE.GOB.MX/FRESNO or call 1-877-639-4835.

Aug. 14 – Introduction to Word Computer Class – 10am-11:45pm
Tulare Public Library, Visalia Branch will offer a computer class. To sign up for any computer classes call 713-2713 or stop by the research and information desk.

Aug. 16 – Central Coast Wine Tasting
Lemoore Parks and Recreation will offer a wine bus trip featuring transportation, continental breakfast, wine tasting at three fine Central Coast wineries and a specialty lunch from one of the wineries. Departure is from the Civic Auditorium. Cost is $65 per person. For information, visit lemoore.com/parks.

Aug. 16 – What is Cranial Sacral Therapy? – 2:30-3:30pm
Tulare Public Library will offer an alternative health seminar featuring guest speaker Debbie Gledhill. For information, visit tularepubliclibrary.org.

Aug. 17-18 - iShare Conference
Southern California Conference of Seventh Day Adventists will host its iShare conference at the Visalia Convention Center. For information, visit ishareconference.org.

Aug. 17 – PFLAG Meeting – 3-5pm
Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays Tulare & Kings County will discuss mental health at its monthly meeting. PFLAG provides a safe and confidential space place to talk about sexual orientation and gender identity, and works to build a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity. PFLAG meets on the third Sunday each month at the Educational and Cultural Center, Congregation B'nai David, 1039 S. Chinowth, Visalia. For information, visit www.pflag-tulare-kings.org.

Woods, The Mattson 2, Helio Sequence, Man Man to Help SNV Mark 10th

Aaron Gomes

Sound N Vision Foundation marks its 10th anniversary this month with shows headlined by Woods, The Mattson 2, Helio Sequence and Man Man. The schedule includes the first ever SNV all ages show at the Cellar Door on August 17.

On Tuesday, August 12, Woods and Skygreen Leopards perform a 9:30pm (21+) show at the Cellar Door in Downtown Visalia. Tickets are $10.

Woods

Woods' brand of pop shamanism has undergone several gradual transformations over their past few albums, but on their latest, *With Light and with Love*, the tinkering reveals an expanded sonic palette that includes singing saw, heavier emphasis on percussion, and a saloon piano that sounds like it was rescued from a flooded basement.

The group's profile is high, with consistent rave reviews in all major media outlets, and festival performances that include The Pitchfork Music Festival, Hardly Strictly in S.F., etc.

If you've ever thought of Woods as a pop group comprised of weirdos, or a weirdo band that happens to excel at playing pop songs almost in spite of itself, *With Light and with Love* provides a corrective in the form of songs that show these two elements as natural, inextricable bedfellows. Throughout the album, vocals are frequently emitted through Leslie speakers and guitars perform one-string ragas like Sandy Bull reared on shoegaze and skate videos. *With Light And With Love* is an album of deeply psychedelic, deeply satisfying songs for a new age of searchers, of Don Juan and Animal Chin alike.

Helio Sequence

Label-mates Skygreen Leopards are a magical psych-pop band from San Francisco, exploring unique perspective and clever wording atop well-constructed and whimsical music.

In order to represent all ages of the community, Sound N Vision Foundation will be having two concerts on Friday, August 15th to celebrate our ten years of booking events. The first party will be an intimate all ages free concert at Velouria Records, 101 W. Main St., Visalia, with The Mattson 2 performing at 7pm. Then, the party continues for those 21+ that same night with a 9:30pm show at Cellar Door when the Mattson 2 play once again, this time after opening band Taco Wagon. Both events are free, but donations are welcomed.

If you could soundtrack the jangle of the sea and the jazz of the surf, the Mattson 2 would most certainly be the composers. The foot stomps of a shoegazed salty air meets the tight groove and polished shake of the night with each of the duo's multi-layered tracks. Audiences around the globe are witnessing the growth of two musicians (actual twin brothers) hitting full stride with deft layering, detailed composition and an altogether unmistakable sound.

With their signature suits in tow, both Jared and Jonathan have relentlessly toured throughout Brazil, Paris, Spain, Japan, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands and the United States, generating global acclaim while also further curating their sound into a musical kaleidoscope that brings to mind everyone from Charles Mingus and Chet Baker to the Smiths and the Jesus and Mary Chain. They have acquired a pair of bachelor's degrees in music with an emphasis in jazz and African studies from the University of California San Diego, and even more recently received their masters of fine arts degrees in music from University of California Irvine. At UC Irvine, they were a part of the Integrated Composition, Improvisation and Technology program (ICIT). The boys have grown up quick, accomplishing more in a short time than many musicians in their entire career, and thus further providing a mature sound that is equally at home on the beach as it is in the jazz club.

The Mattson 2

Visalia's own Taco Wagon will warm up the stage with their unmistakable surf-rock tuneage.

On Sunday, August 17, Helio Sequence and Liam Finn perform a 7pm all ages show at the Cellar Door in Downtown Visalia. Tickets are $10 in advance, $12 at the door.

Portland, Oregon Sub Pop Records giant The Helio Sequence have played some of the most memorable live shows in Visalia, but haven't been in town for five years. This long-awaited return to Visalia is in support of the band's new record, *Negotiations,* the fifth full-length album written, recorded and produced by the band.

Man Man

For the past decade, The Helio Sequence has been one of the more influential bands in the Pacific Northwest indie rock scene. As independent music has become more popular and entered the mainstream consciousness, concerts by experienced indie bands like The Helio Sequence have become increasingly sought after. Having the band return to Visalia is a special event.

Their new album is collection of shimmering, reverb-heavy songs is a meditation on those inner dialogues with solitude, memory, misgivings, loss, atonement, acceptance and hope. Most of all, it's a record that serves as a testament to the beauty, blessing and excitement of a fresh start.

Kicking off the night is New Zealand's Liam Finn. Finn tours in support of his new record, *The Nihilist*, that touches upon MGMT and Flaming Lips terrain.

On Friday, August 22, Man Man and Landlady perform a 9:30pm (21+) show at the Cellar Door in Downtown Visalia. Tickets are $13.

Man Man is a fearlessly unique band from Philadelphia. Sound N Vision Foundation has hosted hundreds of shows, but the 2005 Man Man show remains one of our most talked about shows to this day. Since then, the band has honed their craft with every album release and lengthy tours.

Man Man's fifth full-length album, *On Oni Pond*, is a compelling mash-up of Fear of Music-era Talking Heads, classic soul, psychedelia, hip hop and '50s rock and roll. With its imaginative yet economical rhythms, huge hooks and overriding sense of urgency, *On Oni Pond* melds these seemingly disparate influences into an unexpectedly lush, melodic album, exquisitely consolidated by the band's unique and affecting vision.

"This is a strange and beautiful record but it's also head on and fearless," says main-man Honus Honus. "It's not a record that's going to flirt with you, this is a record that's asking you out. If you get into bed with us there's going to be a relationship."

Brooklyn's Landlady will kick off the night. The large group creates a unique sound that pulls from varied influences: Sly and the Family Stone, The Pixies, Os Mutantes, Gilberto Gil, The Flaming Lips.

For tickets, visit Ticketweb.com. For more information, visit snvfoundation.org.

Aaron Gomes is the executive director of Sound N Vision.

Anniversary

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album coming out in conjunction with this show," explained Gomes about the band's selection. "The timing of their Agar tour matched up perfectly with our celebration. It was destiny that my favorite instrumental duo would end up playing the party. We had to give the event to the community. "

Two days later, SNV will host its first-ever all-ages show at the Cellar Door.

"For many years now, Sound N Vision Foundation has been trying to find a suitable all ages venue to allow youth to experience the top-tier entertainment they've been bringing to Cellar Door on a weekly basis," said Gomes. "Organizers finally realized that their all-ages venue had been waiting for them all along.

"Emails were exchanged with the city planning commission and we learned that the Cellar Door can function like a regular downtown restaurant as long as the all-ages concert event is over by 9pm. So the Cellar Door will finally be able to offer a few all-ages shows to the kids every year.

"Being that this is our first all ages show at Cellar Door, we figured Helio Sequence was a great choice," he continued. "They've influenced much of the younger bands coming out of the Portland area. We want young kids to experience a band that has pioneered and fostered a sound and helped build a scene in their city, that later blossomed on a large scale. In addition, they're the nicest guys, always talking, encouraging and inspiring fans after the show."

SNV will channel its efforts into a collective known as Culture 5, a group founded over the past two weeks that will combine Sound N Vision and people who "are going to stay unnamed," said Gomes.

"Culture 5 is going to exemplify the finer tastes in music, visual art, craft beers, food and artisan crafts," Gomes explained, adding that those five elements inspired the group's name. "Culture 5 is a collective that will work alongside Sound N Vision. It will be bringing in all the other aspects of life and what people enjoy. Beyond the festival, we will have free events along with social media and print. We're going to announce all that. I can guarantee you that by next year it's going to have a huge presence."

Culture 5's first major event will be a festival on October 18th at Rawhide Park that will feature music, visual art, artisan crafts, food and craft brewers.

"It's just bringing all the art mediums together," said Gomes, estimating that the crowd will "easily be in the thousands."

The headliner will be Nick Waterhouse, a rhythm & blues and soul revivalist.

"He's a really big deal," said Gomes, adding that he sells out concerts everywhere he goes. "The reason I chose Nick Waterhouse is that his sound is timeless. Your dad can enjoy it with you, as well as your kids. He's cool and superhip."

Meanwhile, Sound N Vision will continue planning its own programs and events. In fact, SNV has plans to grow.

The next step for Sound N Vision, according to Gomes, is to provide free music and art classes for the youth of Visalia year round. SNV has an Indiegogo campaign underway for this goal, as well as to purchase a variety of instruments, including quality ukuleles to get even younger kids (with their smaller hands) involved in music, and have some money in the bank for deposits on bigger shows.

"Our fundraising partnership with Indiegogo ends on August 23 and we hope to raise at least $6,000 to grow our services," said Gomes. "I'm hoping that the community SNV has invested so much in, will in turn, invest in SNV by donating to this fundraiser campaign."

For more information, visit www.snvfoundation.org.

After Discovering Chopper's Curse, Rawhide Takes Measures to Reverse It

Donny Baarns

It's been 35 years since the Rawhide last won the California League championship. And the spirit of a key reptilian figure is to blame.

Over the past three-and-a-half decades, Visalia's professional baseball club has suffered a litany of misfortunes.

They've reached the Cal League Finals seven times. They've lost all seven.

They reached four consecutive finals from 1980-83. In 1983, they were led by future Hall of Famer Kirby Puckett. They still lost.

In 1990, they had the best record in the league, and were upset in the first round.

In 2003, they had the best record in the league, and were upset in the semi-final series.

In 2006, they were four outs away from a championship, leading Inland Empire 2 games to 1 in the final series and 2-1 with two outs in the 8th inning of Game 4. They lost.

In 2010, they had a four-game lead over Modesto for the final playoff spot with six games to play. They blew two 6-0 leads over the final week, lost five of their last six, watched Modesto win their last six, and failed to make the postseason.

In the last five California League seasons, the Rawhide are the only franchise that has failed to make the playoffs once…in a league where six of ten teams qualify for them each year. If you're scoring at home, the odds of missing the playoffs five straight times in such a system are literally 100 to 1.

And this month, the Rawhide, who had hovered within two games of the San Jose Giants with just a two weeks left in the first half, suffered freak injuries to their starting catcher (who was hit by a stray bat during batting practice) and slugging third baseman (who injured his hand on a routine swing). They finished second.

Clearly, luck has not been with Visalia. But is there more to it than that?

The 1978 Visalia team was one of the best in minor league history; they dominated the league, winning 100 games and losing only 44. They scored over 1,000 runs, batted over .300 as a team, had two 18-game-winners on their pitching staff, and defeated Lodi in the finals for the championship.

They had multiple stars, but one man was the heartbeat of the team: Joe Charboneau.

"Super Joe," as fans called him, batted .350 for Visalia, earning admiration and awe for his daring exploits on and off the field. Two years later, he would be named the American League Rookie of the Year and become a cult figure in Cleveland.

Charboneau was the life of every party in the summer of '78, and was famously willing to do or try nearly anything, including drinking beer through his nose and pulling his own tooth.

Wait…did we mention that he owned a pet alligator that year?

Why yes, in fact, he did.

Its name was Chopper. It was Brazilian. And it lived in Joe's bathtub.

Chopper, by all accounts, was a good-natured, even-tempered young reptile. Except when he tried to bite his owner. Or eat a teammate's kitten.

"He was a great pet," Charboneau later said. "I was really attached to him. I was going to train him to wrestle me. He would have grown to be about six feet long, so I would have had the height advantage."

In short, Chopper was living the dream. But the dream (and Chopper) didn't live long.

After the team was crowned California League Champions, Charboneau went home to Illinois. Chopper, due to increasing size, logistics, and spousal reluctance, did not go with him. Heartbroken, Super Joe was forced to leave his beloved animal with a teammate.

Not long after, Chopper decided he'd had enough of being restricted to an aquarium. He made a heroic leap out of the water, and towards the sweet ground of freedom.

He missed.

Instead of making his escape, the raging gator hit his head on the tank, and passed from this life. Visalia, it turned out, could not contain him.

Is it a coincidence that things haven't been the same for Tulare County's only professional sports team since Chopper's tragic and untimely death? Is it possible that his angry spirit still haunts Rawhide Ballpark, causing misfortune to repeatedly befall the club?

Last week, the Rawhide turned to local psychics for their advice. Their conclusion, after much deliberation and consultation, was to make Chopper's disturbed and restless spirit feel more welcomed; to invite him to become a part of the team. By doing so, his angry aura may shift to a more positive light.

Armed with this new knowledge, the ballclub is committed to pacifying Chopper and reversing his curse.

The club has acquired a "friend" for Chopper, will be introducing a "Rally-Gator" clap (which mimics an alligator chomping sound), and are encouraging fans to bring misters or small squirt guns to the game. According to Shamanism, concealing themselves in the water links the alligator to the emotional body of man. The water's droplets will contain the lesson of discovering and letting go of emotions hidden below the surface.

The Rawhide are definitely setting out to "Reverse the Curse," and appease Chopper's alligator spirit.

Donny Baarns is the voice of the Visalia Rawhide.